COMMONWEAL

$2.00 May 19, 1995

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CORRESPONDENCE

For Michael Kenny

Oregon, Wis.

To the Editors: A warm thank-you to Dolores Leckey for her tribute to Michael Kenny, bishop of Juneau, Alaska ["A Bishop Who Cooked," April 7]. As someone who knew him, loved him, and worked with him, I have many joyful memories of this faithfilled man who lived life with passion and integrity.

We were blessed to have known him. We were doubly blessed to have known God through him.

Rest in peace, Michael, rest in peace.

JUDY COLLISON

Bishop Kenny's courage

Arlington, Va.

To the Editors: In her eulogy for Bishop Michael Kenny, Dolores Leckey focused on his hospitality, photographic memory, and love of the arts. Many of us remember him more for his courage—the courage that Aquinas called the foundation of all virtue. For it is courage that distinguishes him from the majority of his episcopal colleagues.

On justice issues, Bishop Kenny would not be stifled by his own miter—or those of others. At no point was this more clear, and more needed, than in 1992 as the Vatican was putting the heat on the American bishops struggling to draft a pastoral on women. At a time when virtually all leading church people took cover, he spoke out in an article in *America* [August 22, 1992]. Addressing the claim that the church's practice of not ordaining women is evidence of divine mandate and unchangeable tradition, he expressed his belief that "it would be easier to argue that the practice is an expression of a patriarchal era that tended to view females as inferior to males." He ended his article on a poignant note: "I know that I am one small voice....But there are a lot of other small voices...that need to speak out and be heard."

We mourn Michael Kenny's death even as he must have mourned the deafening silence of his fellow bishops. Too few voices. Too little courage. And many of them know better, having listened to the women who provided such rich insight during the preparation of the pastoral.

RAYMOND L. McGOVERN

FROM PEW & PULPIT

Articles in the issue of April 7 on the Catholic priesthood and on the quality of preaching in Catholic parishes have drawn an unusual volume of letters to the editors. A selection appears on pages 41 to 45.

The rich get taxed

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: In your issue of April 21, a letter from Michael Warren took you to task for saying editorially that "Welfare isn't working. On that everyone agrees." In the course of questioning this "assumption," he spoke of "the low taxes of the very rich in our country."

As it happens, just four days before the date of your issue, the *New York Times* ran an AP story from which I quote:

> The taxes of the well-to-do surged 16 percent in 1993....
>
> Tax returns reporting $100,000 or more in income accounted for only 4 percent of the 114.6 million returns filed for 1993. But they amounted to 24 percent of the $3.7 trillion in individual income reported....
>
> The average tax bill for the affluent, those with incomes of more than $100,000, rose by $3,500 to $56,000. Their share of all personal income taxes rose to 43 percent from 39 percent.

It's possible, of course, that "low taxes" and "very rich" mean something different to Mr. Warren than to most of us. Nevertheless, his assumption should not be passed along without correction.

JAMES FINN

Threats to democracy

Rolling Meadows, Ill.

To the Editors: I enjoyed David Carlin's column on "Democracy's Future" [April 7]. The demise of parties that served to blend together the "average, potential apathetic, and potential fanatic" on political issues and political action does threaten democracy.

As a city manager and municipal management consultant for more than twenty-five years, I see two other threats to the future of representative democracy. The first is government by referenda, the second government via the information superhighway.

Representative democracy is a deliberative and inclusive process. Complex issues can be studied and discussed over a period of time. Various viewpoints and interests can be balanced. Elected officials bear responsibility for their decisions.

Referenda, in contrast, reduce complex issues to one-sentence statements. Referenda favor simplistic solutions. They often benefit a small, well-organized minority

(Continued on page 41)

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To kill, or not to kill

We all must die. But no one wants to die without warning, as so many did in the Oklahoma City bombing on April 19: instantly, with no time for a last smile, a final prayer; leaving words unsaid, debts of love and honor unpaid and now unpayable. Nobody wants to die slowly and in great pain, as some in that building must have: bewildered, blocked from rescue, hope dying with each heartbeat. None of us would ask to die of violence. Few of us can escape the pain and grief rising in our minds out of the images of children, one moment peacefully at play, the next crushed and mangled, their bodies and their futures murdered. None of us would choose to die a death without meaning, victims of a raging assassin obsessed with vengeance directed, not at us, but at an abstraction: The Government, The System. And now, even more than after the World Trade Center explosion, we live with new and real fears for ourselves and all those around us.

So we live also with rage. It is a just rage. What took place in Oklahoma City was mass murder, carried out without mercy, with cold disregard for human life, even the lives of little girls and boys, learning early lessons in living and loving in what they and their parents thought was a safe haven. Killing people you don't know for a cause they've never heard of is an action as senseless as it is evil, as cruel as it is stupid.

With all this firmly and unbearably in mind, the editors still do not think these killers, when fairly tried and properly convicted, should suffer the death penalty.

Do those who plotted and carried out this crime deserve to die? It's hard to say No. It's better to say: God knows; we don't. And it's better to ask: Do we deserve to kill them? Do we have a license? Is it good for us? What does it say about us? What does it mean? Will it make us safer? What message will it send?

On its face, the strongest argument made by proponents of the death penalty for murder is that it teaches a profound truth: Human life is sacred, so that anyone who unjustly robs another person of the only life that person has forfeits his or her own right to live. The death penalty, then, is a statement of belief in the value of every human person.

Another rationale is that a killer who is killed won't kill again. True, but the risk involved of a killer killing again, while real, can be minimized; more basically, this argument if adopted would treat a human being as a pathogen to be eliminated, like the virus for smallpox.

Other arguments fail altogether. The great bulk of research says the death penalty does not deter; some studies indicate that it may have a reverse effect. The death penalty is not fairly administered, as amply demonstrated by statistics on race, age, and mental competence of those condemned. Neither is it "cost effective." Beyond question, innocent people have been killed by the state in the name of the people

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(which is to say: Us). Appeals court judges know that fatal mistakes occur; because they know it, the costs of administering the death penalty will continue to exceed the costs of enforcing life sentences.

The best argument against the death penalty (not necessarily the most persuasive) is that it robs God. The next best is that by killing people for killing people we become like unto the killers.

At some risk, we offer the current instance as example. It now appears that, in the minds of the killers, what justified the mass killings in Oklahoma City was the mass killings in Waco, Texas, exactly two years before. Granted, the differences are significant. It was because of bad intelligence, ignorance, poor planning, and, perhaps, *hubris*, that the federal agents in Texas brought about a tragedy when their mission and their intention was to prevent one. In contrast, the Oklahoma City bombers, acting on their own, nonexistent authority, accomplished exactly what they intended: large-scale carnage. Further: If these murderers, or one of them, or some of them, are convicted, sentenced to death, and executed, that will be the last step in a long and (presumably) careful public process.

All that having been said, it remains true that to respond to killing by killing is not fitting, whether for an individual or the state. To recap our reasons, and add others: (1) though full justice can never be achieved short of eternity, human-scale justice can be adequately served by means other than the death penalty; (2) in every case the administration of the death penalty follows upon the exercise of a fallible human judgment; (3) the death penalty does not succeed as an instrument of social control, is more costly to society than life imprisonment, is not necessary to the security of the community; and (4) the death penalty is not a rejection of violence but a societal endorsement of violence. Most importantly, the consequence of a murder and of a legal execution is the same: A human life is ended by an act of human will. Taking life to show that life should not be taken doesn't parse. Its message is that the sanctity of human life admits exceptions.

Finally: punishment; repentance; reconciliation. If we really want to punish killers, we should let them live with their memories. We should hope for *metanoia*, and make it possible. That won't bring the murderers' victims back to life. But neither will killing the murderers. The death penalty satisfies our urge for closure and, secretly, our desire to avenge; an eye for an eye, a life for a life. But it is wrong. Let us not kill.

AN EDITORIAL DISSENT

Christ's admonition to turn the other cheek has never been written into law, and for good reason. The Sermon on the Mount enunciates a spiritual ideal, not a theory of jurisprudence. The Kingdom of God or the church must not be confused with the political community. Catholicism has traditionally acknowledged the moral legitimacy of the death penalty, just as it has defended just wars, and for similar reasons. In both cases, a defense of the common good justifies the resort to violence.

Those justly convicted for the mass killing in Oklahoma City deserve the death penalty. If justice means anything, it means that the willful, premeditated murder of the innocent cannot be seen to be tolerated. I believe that the execution of Nazi war criminals, for example, was meet and just. The living owe the murdered innocent no less—no less than to assume the full burden of judgment and the responsibility for punishment. The state should end the lives of murderers only for heinous crimes, but it is precisely in those instances that the death penalty alone can express the moral outrage of humanity. Punishment itself expresses and embodies society's moral judgment, and just punishment must fit the crime; it must not be too severe, or too lenient. Unjust punishment or unwarranted leniency undermines our sense of fairness, and thereby the common good. In that sense, the crime of murder is trivialized if we do not reserve the right to inflict the death penalty in the most grievous cases.

The principal objection to the death penalty is that the state cheapens the value of life if it in turn and in kind becomes an instrument of killing. But the logic of this argument fails to come to terms with the inherently retributive nature of justice in criminal cases. Does holding kidnappers in prison against their will cheapen human dignity by merely mimicking the crime? That can't be so. Insuring that punishment is proportionate to the crime is the moral dilemma, not the thin paradox of the state resorting to coercion.

Death-penalty abolitionists argue that imposing life terms on murderers leaves the state in a morally superior position. In short, the state avoids getting blood on its hands. I'm not so sure. Convicted killers kill again, either in prison or after they are released. Innocent people are killed as a direct consequence of not imposing the death penalty on the guilty. Those deaths may be a necessary cost of the state washing its hands of direct killing, but it is sentimental to think that outlawing the death penalty will "end the cycle of violence." Neither death-penalty advocates nor opponents can escape with clean hands.

The church has long accepted the retributive aspect of justice, for without it there can be no individual responsibility and therefore no individual freedom. As C.S. Lewis wrote, only a retributive ethic can make the idea of just or unjust punishment coherent. Cures or deterrents either work, or they don't. Justice—moral accountability—involves a different calculus. Justice demands we treat criminals as moral agents responsible for their actions, and that we assume such moral responsibility ourselves. To be sure, retribution must not be just a fancy word for revenge. For that reason, murder is regarded as an assault on the moral order and the community as a whole. Consequently, the judgment rendered by the community through its competent authorities seeks to "redress the disorder caused by the offense," and only indirectly to relieve the agony of individual victims, no matter how grave that private injury may be. It is the deliberations of the law that effect and legitimize the transference of moral outrage from the individual to the community and in so doing help to vindicate the moral order upon which indi-

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vidual rights depend. It is the law that enables us to distinguish justice from revenge and capital punishment from murder. Only in this way has society tamed the righteous anger of victims and prevented individuals from taking the "law" into their own hands.

Still, some argue that only God, no human authority, has the right to take human life, even the life of a justly convicted killer. Traditionally, however, God is understood to be the ultimate source of all authority, not an alternative authority who renders moot the judgments of temporal justice. Indeed, Catholicism has characteristically held that God's authority must be mediated by human institutions. Civil authority is fallible, often woefully so, but it does not follow that we must be agnostic about our ability to seek or render justice in the here and now. Similarly, it cannot be that the more heinous a crime the more futile our judgment becomes, for that would only immunize the most diabolical criminals by virtue of the enormity of their crimes.

An essential element of justice, and one only the community can perform, is to speak for the victims. As Willard Gaylin has written, in our adversarial system the voices and lives of murder victims are quickly forgotten as we direct our attention, necessarily, to the criminal's rights. Once those rights are secured, however, the law surely fails in its primary task—namely, to make human community and life possible—if it does not speak forcefully for the dead and for the moral order of things. That is why the law itself, and the punishment the law demands, does not seek direct compensation for the victims or eventual reconciliation for the criminal, rather it expresses our moral purposes. In punishing, the law articulates and defends the common good. That is why justice must be seen to be done. In imposing the death penalty for especially heinous crimes, the law proclaims in unambiguous terms the value society places on innocent life and the absolute revulsion in which we hold such murders. Moral outrage, mediated by the institutions of justice, is the best way to secure the sanctity of life.

Just as we cannot take the law into our own hands, we cannot replace retributive justice with a disproportionate mercy—and disproportion is what Christian mercy is all about. Finally, only the victims have the right to absolve the killer. Our duty as citizens is to seek justice. That duty is not primarily to ourselves, or to the future, but to the dead.

PAUL BAUMANN

ET CETERA

NOW IT CAN BE TOLD Tad Szulc, the veteran journalist, has recently written, *John Paul II: The Biography* (Scribners). The author is an assiduous collector of details and many aspects of the pope's life already familiar in broad outline are given a new piquancy. How many people realize that, in a triumph of the theatrical (or at least the photogenic) over the ascetic, John Paul II, early in his pontificate, replaced his socialist-issue black-frame glasses with contact lenses?

It is also enlightening to discover that this pope, whose supporters ceaselessly repeat that the church is not a democracy, was nevertheless given a crucial send-off on the road to Rome when he was elected by his fellow priests in Cracow to administer the archdiocese after its ordinary died in 1962. Wojtyla was duly appointed archbishop in 1963, despite the reluctance of the Primate, Cardinal Stefan Wyszynski, but with the tacit approval of the Communist party which thought he'd be an easy man to deal with!

More important is Szulc's research showing that Archbishop Wojtyla, by drafts and documents sent from Cracow and by personal discussion with Pope Paul VI, had a major hand in shaping *Humanae vitae*. One wonders if Karol Wojtyla could have been elected pope if his direct participation in one of the modern church's most divisive decisions had been known—not because the cardinal-electors disagreed (although there were perhaps still some in 1978), but because they might have preferred to let those divisions heal.

REPORT ON EUTHANASIA

BOTTOM OF THE SLOPE

THE DUTCH SLIDE FURTHER STILL

On April 28, 1995 it was reported that the Dutch experiment with euthanasia had reached its nadir. Two years earlier, an infant in the Netherlands, born with the defect of the spinal column called spina bifida and in terrible pain, had been injected with a drug that paralyzed her muscles and stopped her breathing. By means of a surrogate's consent—that of her parents—the little girl's life had been terminated by her physician, Henk Prins. Although Prins was prosecuted for premeditated murder by the Dutch Ministry of Justice two years after the little girl's death, the government hinted that the real reason for the charge was to produce new guidelines permitting newborn euthanasia in extraordinary cases. Justice Minister Winnie Sorgdragger insisted on a trial in order to set a legal precedent in cases where euthanasia candidates are unable to request death. Prins was charged with murder, the court said the charge was proven, yet the doctor was not convicted. What is most extraordinary here, however, is that prescribed regulations requiring a patient's consent for euthanasia have been dismantled in favor of the wishes of a proxy. Karel Gunning, a retired doctor and secretary of a medical anti-euthanasia group in Holland, had earlier predicted that Prins would go free and that his act would lead to "the euthanasia of the useless."

Proponents of active euthanasia and assisted suicide generally downplay the significance of the "slippery slope" argument, citing checks and regulations built into their propositions which

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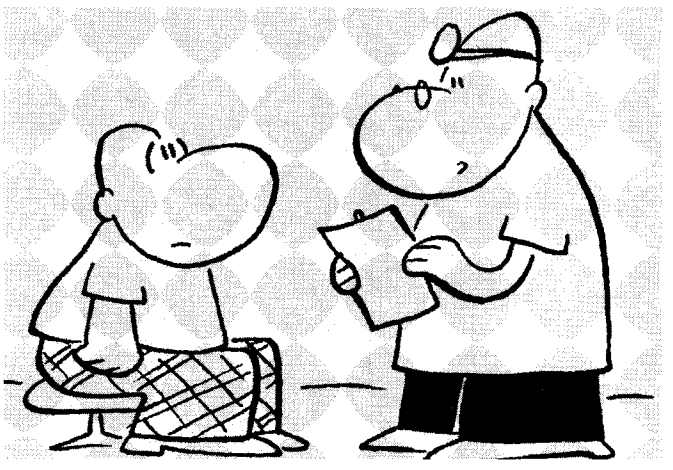
prohibit the drift toward involuntary euthanasia. For example, Measure 16, passed last November in Oregon and now held up under a court injunction, endeavors to ensure that assisted suicide can be legalized without inevitably resulting in "the euthanasia of the useless." This is purportedly ensured because a terminal diagnosis of the patient, concurrence by a second physician, testing for depression, repeated requests at specified intervals, self-administration of the dosage, and family notification are all required. The Dutch experiment demonstrates, however, that such safeguards are weak.

On February 9, 1993, the Netherlands' lower parliamentary house approved guidelines which are to be followed in cases of euthanasia. In voting to allow euthanasia under certain conditions, the Dutch parliament was officially recognizing a practice that had been common for at least twenty years. Though still technically illegal, active euthanasia in the Netherlands is now regularly tolerated where the patient repeatedly asks for his life to be ended; where the patient's consent is free, conscious, and explicit; where patient and physician agree that the suffering being experienced is intolerable; where all other measures for relief have been exhausted; where a second physician has concurred; and where these facts have been duly reported to and recorded by the state prosecutor. If these conditions are not met, it is possible for a doctor administering a lethal injection to a patient to be prosecuted.

It has been demonstrated, however, that the regulations imposed upon the Dutch practice of euthanasia are too often ignored (*see*, Carlos Gomez, *Commonweal*, August 9, 1991). In addition to the 2,300 reported cases of euthanasia in 1990, a further 1,040 had their deaths hastened without making formal requests for intervention. *The Economist* (September 17, 1994), in typical British understatement, noted, "There is a worrying drift in the Dutch experience."

The additional safeguards required by Dutch law and provided by a second physician's concurrence, the exhausting of all other measures, and the intolerability of pain were essentially rendered moot by the case of Hilly Bosscher in 1991. Having endured twenty-five years of spousal abuse by her alcoholic husband, and having suffered the suicide of one son and the death from lung cancer of another, the fifty-year-old former social worker from the Dutch town of Ruinen went to see psychiatrist Boudewijn Chabot for but one reason—she wanted him to help her die. Over the next four months, Chabot tried to relieve Bosscher's depression and urge to commit suicide, but to no avail. Chabot consulted with seven colleagues, all of whom concurred that Bosscher's prognosis was dismal. On September 28, 1991, Chabot gave Bosscher twenty sleeping pills and a toxic liquid mixture, which she administered to herself and died.



"Frankly, sir, with a condition like yours, four out of five doctors recommend death."

Even in the Netherlands, with the most liberal euthanasia policy in the world, there had never been a reported case of a physician helping someone not terminally ill to die. Bosscher's was the first reported case of physician-assisted suicide for the mentally ill. Chabot was subsequently charged with violating the country's implicitly held guidelines on euthanasia. But in June 1994, the Netherlands' highest court ruled that although Chabot neglected to have another physician personally examine Bosscher, the psychiatrist would not be punished. Chabot's lawyer, Eugène Sutorius, concluded, "The ruling recognizes the right of patients experiencing severe psychic pain to choose to die with dignity." Concurring physicians' opinions, the exhaustion of all other measures, and the intolerability of the patient's suffering were thus rendered impracticable in favor of the patient's repeated request and conscious, free, and explicit consent to die. George Annas, health-law professor at Boston University, cautioned, "If you're worried about the slippery slope, this case is as far down as you can get."

The bottom of the slippery slope had not yet been reached, however. After the Bosscher case, there still remained one key condition for active euthanasia to occur in the Netherlands. There was still the safeguard of the free, explicit, persistent, and conscious consent of the patient. With the most recent Netherands' case, however, this last and most important condition has now been removed. A surrogate's decision may now be sufficient to terminate a human being who is not terminally ill. Henk Prins, the doctor who administered the lethal injection to the deformed baby, defends the altruistic motives of her parents: "They did not make their decision out of selfishness or egocentricity. They loved the baby. They were not concerned about having a handicapped baby. What bothered them most was the pain the baby was in. They couldn't bear to see that, and we couldn't stop the pain."

Succinctly put, because they couldn't stop the pain, the parents terminated their baby's life. This is the bottom of the slippery slope. All that awaits now is the broader application of the decision. Oh, there is still the remaining condition regarding repeated requests, but those need no longer be made by the patient. Repeated requests may now be made by a proxy. With this Dutch case, involuntary euthanasia has finally been governmentally sanctioned, with all its horrifying ramifications for the elderly, handicapped, and retarded. Proponents of Oregon's Measure 16 and advocates of similar legislation in a half-dozen other states, beware; like the Dutch, you too will go slip sliding away.

RANDALL E. OTTO

The Rev. Randall E. Otto is research director of Friends for Life of the United Church of Christ.

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SETTING A POSITIVE AGENDA

ANSWERING THE REPUBLICANS

The new Republican majority has proposed an extraordinarily harsh agenda: eliminating subsidized housing, limiting the duration of welfare benefits, and capping funding for school lunch programs. Republicans claim this program grows out of a "contract" with the middle class. Progressives of any stripe seem reduced to little more than opposition to these draconian changes. Part of the reason, however, that the poor are both defenseless and distrusted is that traditional liberal policies never really empowered the poor or even the great majority of U.S. workers. Liberalism set itself up for this backlash. Progressives need a diagnosis of "welfare dependency" which moves us beyond both the New Deal and Newt.

We can begin to understand both why so many depend on welfare and why many others distrust welfare recipients when we look at what the recent economic "boom" means for the quality of citizens' lives. The only boom I see is in temp agencies and the stock market. Many of the new jobs in this recovery are part-time or temporary and offer no benefits. Businesses are able to keep costs low and profits high—but at great long-run detriment to society.

Many of those fortunate enough to have full-time jobs are now working long hours at jobs which remain rote, narrow, and minutely supervised. Such work stimulates neither creativity nor long-term productivity gains. Much of the increased overtime is imposed by bosses who can fire recalcitrant workers.

We have, in short, a two-tiered workforce: poor and disproportionately minority workers moving in and out of short-term, part-time, subpoverty-level jobs, and overworked traditional full-time factory and office workers. The latter are insecure and afraid of losing their jobs, but fear and overwork do not make productive workplaces. Productivity growth and incomes stagnate. Even so, their managers, subject to the pressures of pension and mutual funds, worry more about short-term profits than long-term investment in job redesign and worker training for either employed or unemployed workers. Since overworked employees enjoy little opportunity for family life or the development of skills and interests inside or outside those jobs, they can all too easily come to resent those who—for whatever reasons—are not working full-time and receive even meager support from government.

Conservatives can easily step into this climate and promise lower taxes and freedom from government "strangulation" of the market. However, those with any historical sense know that unregulated markets lead to extremes of wealth and poverty and uncushioned business cycles which can destroy societies. We must, therefore, devise an alternative which improves the quality of life for both welfare recipients and traditional office and factory workers.

In the current climate of hostility to welfare, progressives should begin with a critique of welfare for the rich and a program which would, like Social Security, offer a universal safety net which would benefit everyone. Republican cuts in housing assistance should be opposed, but progressives should also point out that the government's biggest housing program is not for the poor but for the rich. Eighty percent of the $52 billion in benefits conveyed by the deductibility of home-mortgage interest goes to the top 20 percent of the income pyramid. If this program were to be changed to a simple tax credit (the benefit from which does not depend on one's tax bracket), and capped at a reasonable amount, it would increase the supply of affordable housing for all poorer and working-class citizens—without added cost to the government.

Tax and welfare policies affecting parents of young children are also in need of reforms modeled on European child-allowance programs. In the U. S. context, progressives should advocate a universal child allowance of at least $3,000 per child for preschool children. This allowance would ease the burden of poor single mothers at the same time as it reduced some of the financial pressures and provided more flexibility for middle-class families. Such changes could easily be funded by very modest increases in the progressivity of the tax code and by cuts in the cold-war military budget.

The largest single task of a progressive politics is to create good jobs. The needs of the old and the young, both for education, companionship, and preventive health care, are neglected. Community development agencies should be funded at a level based on the amount of local unemployment and should have the right to establish priorities and invest in energy and transit programs, nonprofits meeting community needs, and even private-sector businesses willing to make long-term training and employment commitments.

Periodic borrowing by government is needed to fund social investment and smooth the business cycle, but deficits are not the only way to create new jobs. Nor should we be eternally wedded to the forty- (or more) hour work week as "full-time" if we care about quality of life. Outlawing forced overtime would by itself create hundreds of thousands of new jobs. Over the longer haul, labor should have the right to convert future gains in productivity into shorter working hours rather than higher yearly wages. Employers should also not be allowed to discriminate against part-time workers by denying them prorated benefits. These changes would increase the number of quality full- and part-time jobs and give workers more time for family and leisure pursuits.

Deficit spending and higher employment levels need not lead to inflation, a weaker currency, or an "uncompetitive " economy if these changes are accompanied by reforms of the corporate work-process itself. Several recent studies have shown that giving workers an independent voice in the design of job ladders and broader corporate planning improves productivity. Reforms of pension-fund and banking practices could allow citizens and workers to use their own savings to help foster such trends. These reforms are not simply more "big government."

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They would level the economic playing field and make our markets more just and efficient.

Even after such progressive changes, there will be some for whom pressing family obligations, health, and emotional problems will make transition into even a humane world of work impossible. Surely we must preserve a genuine safety net for those who cannot or even will not work. I am convinced, however, that welfare rolls will shrink dramatically in a society where the number of remunerative and stimulating jobs grows. Just as important, I believe that willingness to shoulder the responsibility of welfare will grow when most citizens enjoy just compensation in reasonable workplaces and have more time for friends, family, and leisure pursuits.

Since this agenda will not be adopted any time soon, wouldn't it be more prudent to concentrate on opposing cuts in the present safety net? We must in fact make such fights, but welfare will not blunt the forces which expand the pool of poor, jobless citizens nor lessen the growing emotional and economic burdens on a tired working class. They are palliatives at best. If activists don't keep a more radical analysis and agenda alive, the increasing difficulties of traditional liberal reforms in stemming the tide of corporate power can only contribute to an intensified and more belligerent conservatism. JOHN BUELL

John Buell is author of Democracy by Other Means: The Politics of Work, Leisure, and Environment, *which will be published by the University of Illinois Press in July.*

WORLD WATCH

J. Bryan Hehir

GET A (CULTURE OF) LIFE

THE POPE'S MORAL VISION

John Paul II's eleventh encyclical, *The Gospel of Life* (March 25, 1995) is yet another testimony to a central conviction of this papacy, namely, that words and ideas are the crucial determinants of history. The reception accorded the most recent text demonstrates John Paul II's continuing ability to gain a hearing for his ideas, however different they are from prevailing cultural convictions. The *New York Times* devoted almost a quarter of the front page to a photo and story about the encyclical; *Newsweek* made it the cover story; European colleagues tell me the coverage there was extensive. All this occurred before the religious community began its detailed analysis in weekly and monthly journals.

The encyclical bears the pope's distinctive style, a biblically based meditation and argument about a broad range of controversial issues. The text exhibits the discursive, sometimes repetitive character of earlier encyclicals. The four chapters logically admit of a different order than one finds in the text. It seems to me that the first chapter, on threats to life, leads directly to chapter 3, a detailed argument about the defense of life in different circumstances. Chapter 2, the positive Christian vision of life, leads directly to chapter 4, building a culture of life.

Embedded in these four long chapters are a variety of arguments. The dominant character of the encyclical is its overarching moral vision. Cast in the cosmic categories of a "culture of death" contending with a "culture of life," *The Gospel of Life* seeks to galvanize the witness of the church and to challenge ideas, laws, and policies which threaten human life in different but deadly ways.

The pope's classification of these threats to life can be divided into ancient, modern, and postmodern categories. The ancient threats, well-known, are rooted in the worst instincts of human nature and persist with a virulence which defies any conception that history is a constant march toward improvement. The ancient threats are poverty and hunger, war and genocide. From Central Europe to Sub-Saharan Africa, the ancient scourges—some the product of nature, others the result of human hatred—number their victims today in the millions.

The modern threats are more complex in origin and character. They are often rooted in the best instincts of human nature, in the quest for knowledge, the development of modern science, the expanding reach of technology. The modern threats characteristically are rooted in the qualitatively new power which modern science and technology have placed in human hands.

In the past fifty years, American society has split the atom, cracked the genetic code, and pierced the veil of space. We have also dramatically expanded our capacity for medical intervention in the final stages of life. Each of these developments has produced major advances in human knowledge, in applied technology, and in creating the culture of postindustrial society. Each of them also has demonstrated that technological innovation is not always accompanied by moral wisdom.

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Churchill's comment that the Balkans produced more history than they could consume finds an analogous application here. Technology—nuclear, genetic, medical—has its own logic, but it does not have its own ethic. From the first encyclical of his pontificate, *The Redeemer of Man*, John Paul II has focused on the issue of providing moral direction for science and technology as a dominant challenge for church and society. The pope never assumes a position of fundamental opposition to either scientific research or technological change; his concern is to place both within the identifiable limits of the moral universe.

This abiding interest in maintaining traditional restraints in the face of contemporary developments in science, technology, and politics reaches a new level of intensity and detail in *The Gospel of Life* when the pope turns to the "postmodern" threats to life. These are rooted not in what we can do but in how we think. Peter Steinfels (*New York Times*, April 1, 1995) accurately identified the principal objective of this encyclical: it is the pope's address to the culture of advanced technological societies. In one sense it is an attempt at dialogue, in the spirit of Vatican II's *Gaudium et spes*. But the tone is not entirely dialogical; in many passages it is a declaration, a lecture to the culture of societies which John Paul believes have lost their moral moorings. The postmodern threats are the pope's principal concern; they are well represented in two passages of the encyclical: "Choices once unanimously considered criminal and rejected by the common moral sense are gradually becoming socially acceptable....no less grave and disturbing is the fact that conscience itself, darkened as it were by such widespread conditioning, is finding it increasingly difficult to distinguish between good and evil in what concerns the basic value of human life."

This is the heart of the issue. The fundamental purpose of *The Gospel of Life* is to project a moral vision and to provide a structure of moral reasoning that will illuminate a direction for personal conscience, professional ethics, and public policy on questions threatening human life in this final decade of a very violent century. Neither the vision (chapter 2) nor the moral argument (chapter 3) breaks new ground; the power and value of the encyclical lie in its synthetic quality, bringing together broad themes and specific conclusions in the style of a Brandeis brief, projecting a definite viewpoint on a multiplicity of issues which are usually treated in isolation in our civil debates.

The pope's opposition to abortion reaffirms what has been said at every level of Catholic teaching; his case against euthanasia and assisted suicide is carefully drawn and summarizes traditional and recent teaching on topics which will be increasingly the focus of the "life debate" in American society. Even the well-publicized section on capital punishment amounts to a change in emphasis; the pope raises substantially the presumption against the state's right to take life in the name of domestic security. It is an important and welcome authoritative statement, but continues a pattern of reasoning used by the American bishops and others for the past fifteen years.

The encyclical combines, therefore, a powerful moral vision, a traditional moral argument, and an urgent call to personal and social conscience. How will it be received? The answer depends on three large arguments which the pope enters and which can only be identified here and must await further commentary. First, an internal issue in Catholic social teaching; John Paul II addresses his case to the church and civil society, but it is a case made almost exclusively in terms of biblical imagery and theological reflection. Unlike John XXIII's moral appeal to civil society in *Peace on Earth*, John Paul calls upon all to enter the rich symbolic discourse of the Scriptures to find direction for moral choice. There is a tension here between this vision and secular pluralistic culture which the encyclical never acknowledges.

Second, the heart of the pope's appeal to civil society is his discussion of law and morality. His position is a classical statement that civil law and policy must reflect moral law, even if they cannot simply replicate it. But John Paul's vision of how much civil law can do in postindustrial societies is very expansive. In many ways his proposals are exactly what one would expect from a magisterial document. But they do not struggle with the conditions which Catholic politicians, administrators, and professionals face even if they are wholly convinced of the moral vision of *The Gospel of Life*. We will need to hear from the practitioners on this topic.

Third, John Paul continues in this letter a theme found in *Centesimus annus* (1991) and *Veritatis splendor* (1993). He distinguishes the political institutions of democracy from the cultural context of democratic societies. He endorses the first more decisively than any pope in the Catholic tradition. He finds much less to support in the culture. There is much to criticize in the cultural presuppositions of postindustrial society, but the dynamic of politics and culture requires more attention than even this long, welcome encyclical provides. □

OF SEVERAL MINDS David R. Carlin, Jr.

THERE ARE NO SINGLE ISSUES

SOME OF MY BEST FRIENDS ARE PROLIFE

About ten years ago there was a lot of talk in liberal Catholic circles about the dangers of a "single issue" mentality on abortion. I used to share this concern. Abortion is a great evil, yes, especially when the law of the land permits it on a virtually unrestricted basis. But it is far from being the only evil; to choose randomly from the list, we also have poverty, racism, and the national deficit.

Well, I've changed my mind (sort of). I still object to the one-issue mind, but in

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the last few years I've come to have a broader acquaintance with prolife activists and voters, and among the ones I've met almost none has anything like a single-issue mentality. Abortion is usually their number-one issue, true; but it is always part of a complex of interconnected issues. I may not always be pleased with their other issues, but they certainly do have them.

When you think about it for a moment, you realize it is virtually impossible for an anti-abortion person to have a single-issue mind. Regardless of whether you're prolife or prochoice, your position on abortion is logically (or at least psychologically) connected with a wide range of other questions—religion, marriage, family, childrearing, education, sexual conduct, personal autonomy, tolerance, community responsibility, etc. And while one should never underestimate the infinite resources of human stupidity, a prolife or prochoice person would have to be very stupid indeed not to see these connections. That's why we find every day that a person's position on the abortion issue is a reliable predictor of where he or she stands on a dozen other issues.

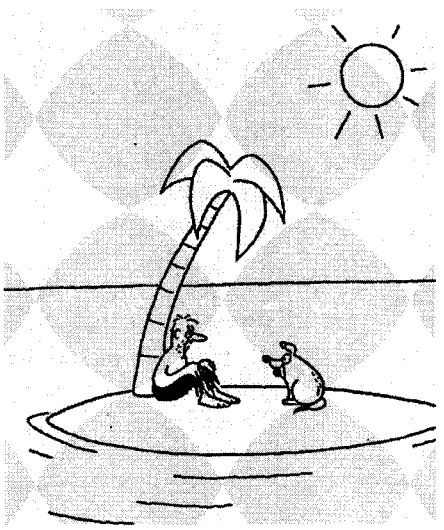
An anti-abortion position, then, is part of a series of positions. But here a difficulty arises, since it may be part of any number of different series. For John Ludd, it is just one more instance of his negative reaction to anything new. For Mary Prude, it is part of her disapproval of anything that smacks of sexual freedom. For Tom Chauvin, it is another step in his continuing battle to keep women in their place. For Susan Limbaugh, it is nothing more than an element in her generalized dislike of liberals and Democrats.

For Cardinal Joseph Bernardin of Chicago, who formulated the theory of the "seamless garment" or "consistent ethic of life," love of God and neighbor will not permit abortion; nor will it permit indifference to the plight of those tempted to abortion; nor capital punishment; nor racism and sexism; nor indifference to poverty, illness, suffering, oppression; nor nuclear warfare; nor war itself except as a very last resort.

But if there is no such thing as a single-issue anti-abortion mentality, why over the years have there been so many warnings about this mentality, especially in liberal Catholic circles?

One reason is that liberal Catholics are generally sympathetic to Democrats and political liberals, whom they see as the good guys on most issues other than abortion. They fear that if abortion becomes a high-profile issue for Catholic voters, Democrats and liberalism will suffer while Republicans and conservatism gain.

Other reasons are similar to this. There is a fear that prolife Catholics will situate their anti-abortionism in the wrong series, for example, the antiprogress series, the



"Oh, give it a rest, will you?"

antiwoman series, the antisex series. So, since they may do the wrong thing if you stir up their anti-abortion sentiments, better not stir them up; better cool them down.

There is also a social class bias at work here. Liberal Catholics generally belong to the better-educated and more-privileged sections of society, and it is hard for them not to share the prejudices of their class. Among these is the notion that the typical prolife activist is more than a bit simple-minded. We patricians are intelligent enough not to become single-issue anti-abortionists, but can we trust the plebeians to do the same? Better dampen their enthusiasm by low-keying the abortion issue.

Then again, there is a widespread misunderstanding of the seamless garment theory. Many Catholics, including many members of the clergy, have understood the theory to call for reining in the prolife movement, so that the anti-abortion drive makes progress at the same rate as the drives to implement other elements of the consistent ethic agenda—but no faster. The image is that of an army advancing along a broad front; the prolife divisions should not thrust a hundred miles in advance of the general front.

Ironically, the long-term effects of these warnings against a single-issue mentality have been just the opposite of those intended. Hardcore Catholic prolifers have not remained in the Democratic party; overwhelmingly they have turned Republican. They do not see liberals as the good guys on everything but abortion; instead they see them as the bad guys on everything including abortion. They have not abstained from integrating anti-abortionism in a series of conservative causes; rather they have done precisely that. For the most part, they have not embraced the "consistent ethic of life" approach; instead, many have come to see that phrase as a code term for inaction, and they are more likely to look on Pat Robertson than on Cardinal Bernardin as their religious hero.

It may be said by the Catholic liberal, "Don't worry, these hard-core prolifers are only a minority of all Catholics." A minority, yes; but a big minority; and a bigger minority still when we consider them as a fraction of the people who really count in the church, namely the regular churchgoing and contributing Catholics. For the most part these hard-core prolifers are the most committed, the most intense of American Catholics. As they expand toward becoming a critical mass, others are drawn their way. Thus it will be no surprise if the future of American Catholicism lies with them.

The probability that the future will be theirs was significantly increased last month when Pope John Paul II issued his *Gospel of Life* encyclical, which goes a long way toward making the prolife position the defining mark of contemporary Catholicism.

In the early 1950s, some people used to ask, "How did we lose China?" It is not too early for Catholic liberals to ask, "How did we lose the prolifers?" □

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AFFIRMATIVE ON AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

BUT NOT OPTIMISTIC

DON WYCLIFF

Nothing in the current debate over affirmative action has rankled me more as a black person than the question: "Isn't thirty years enough?"

It has been asked by many people, but perhaps most prominently by Jesse Helms on the floor of the Senate in March. "Isn't thirty years enough?" Helms intoned, as he announced that he was introducing legislation to end all federal affirmative-action programs.

Isn't thirty years of affirmative action enough?

To put that into perspective, recall that the first black settlers arrived here as slaves in 1619. In the 376 years since, African-Americans have enjoyed two periods of relative normalcy, two periods of about thirty years each in which they were subject to neither involuntary servitude nor officially sanctioned second-class citizenship. And those two periods were separated by about seventy years.

Sixty good years out of 376—and people have the nerve to ask whether thirty years of affirmative action isn't enough. Incredible!

Nevertheless, the political facts of life suggest to me that thirty years will have to be enough. Because affirmative action, at least insofar as it means efforts to overcome the historically imposed disadvantages of black folks (and definition is part of the problem in this debate), looks like a goner.

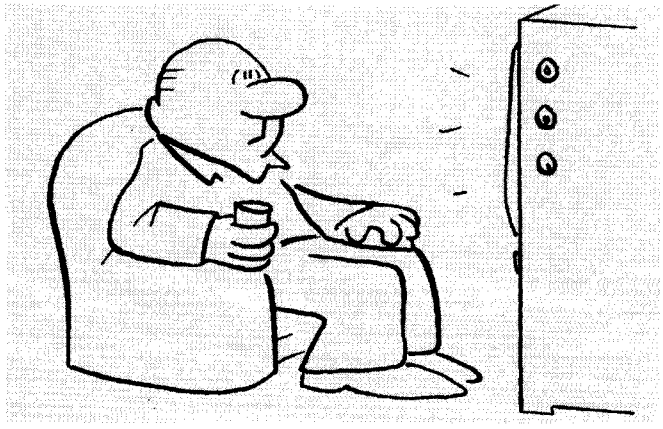
My personal crystal ball says that 1996 will bring a watershed event of some sort in American race relations—a Supreme Court decision? passage of the California Civil Rights Initiative? the election of Phil Gramm?—that will be the symbolic equivalent of *Plessy* v. *Ferguson* in 1896. That, of course, was the Supreme Court decision that made "separate but equal" the law of the land, marking a kind of official end to Reconstruction and laying the juridical foundation for Jim Crow. The new event, whatever it turns out to be, will ring down the curtain on the most recent period of black advancement. God willing, we'll not regress as far as Jim Crow.

I fear that the foregoing suggests I am much more an unqualified supporter of affirmative action than I am. The fact is that it has troubled me for a long time and for a number of reasons, although none of them is killing.

It really can foster doubt about the legitimacy of the achievements of those it's meant to benefit—not just in the minds of white males, but also in the minds of the blacks, women, or other beneficiaries. I don't think this is a crippling defect. (It certainly doesn't seem to have crippled the white men who benefited from affirmative action in decades past by not having to compete with excluded portions of the population.) As Stephen Carter observed in his book, *Reflections of an Affirmative Action Baby* (Basic Books, 1991), what's critical is not how one comes to the opportunity, but what one does with it.

Affirmative action imposes obligations on its beneficiaries, and no one has demonstrated that, on balance, those beneficiaries don't measure up as well as those from the traditional talent pools. (Of course, there's no reason they shouldn't measure up. Affirmative action has never been about hiring, promoting, admitting, or selecting unqualified persons. Rather, it is about looking for qualified persons in unaccustomed places.)

Another troubling aspect of affirmative action, at least at one time, had to do with the message that I perceived was being sent to young black people. During the bad old days before the civil rights movement, young black folks used to be told, "You've got to be twice as good as the white boy to get half as far." After the advent of affirmative action, the message sometimes seemed to be, "Don't worry, you've got an



"In other news, the city Optimists' Club gave up today...."

DON WYCLIFF *is editorial page editor of the* Chicago Tribune.

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ace up your sleeve—you're a minority."

As a matter of historical equity, that may have been satisfying. After all, for centuries having white skin has amounted to having a whole deck of aces up one's sleeve. Turnabout is fair play. But in terms of its effect on the motivations of individual young black people, this could not be a healthy message to send.

I cannot know how widely or deeply this message may have been absorbed. But that it was a legitimate concern and not just a figment of my imagination became clear to me at a Congressional Black Caucus seminar in Washington in the late 1980s. A young black man, a college student, rose and naively asked a question in which he raised the possibility that affirmative action might be detrimental to the efforts of blacks to help themselves. The distinctively unappreciative response from the panelists, all defenders of affirmative action in higher education, suggested that he had touched a sore spot.

But however large or small this problem once may have been, I doubt, given the temper of recent times, that it has been one at all lately.

A far more substantial affirmative-action concern is the expansion of the number of groups and categories who are counted as "excluded" or "disadvantaged" and therefore qualify as beneficiaries. It's not that I would withhold from others an advantage that I enjoy. Rather, such an expansion was bound to undermine support for the concept of affirmative action itself, by diluting the sense that this was an obligation to justice. Remember, affirmative action (at least as originally conceived) was about compensation—reparation?—for disadvantages stemming from massive, unique, and undisputed historical wrongs. In this society, those criteria qualify two groups: African-Americans and Native Americans. Any others are a stretch.

The addition of women as a disadvantaged group and the broadening of the pool of disadvantaged minorities—however defensible these things may have been on an intellectual basis—undermined the emotional support necessary to sustain affirmative action as a matter of compensatory justice. When everybody is a victim, nobody is.

But the problem for affirmative action now is not just that it has lost support, but that it inspires opposition, and even anger. Far from being a device to achieve compensatory justice, its opponents say, affirmative action has itself become a source of injustice. "Reverse discrimination" has become the battle cry of the opponents.

By any objective, empirical standard, such complaints have to be counted as vastly overblown. A world in which the median wage of white men exceeds that of any other ethnic or gender category by at least a third has hardly been turned upside down by affirmative action. A world in which white men still possess 90-plus percent of all the top-level management jobs is hardly one in which white male hegemony is threatened by affirmative action.

(Of course, these same figures cut the other way as well. If, after thirty years of affirmative action, this is all the beneficiaries have to show for it, then why is it so important and valuable?)

But to argue over objective, empirical evidence—statistics—is to miss the point of the opposition to affirmative action. The point is philosophical: Affirmative action, involving government-sanctioned preference on the basis of accidental characteristics, represents a departure from principles of individual merit and achievement and equal protection of the laws that are the essence of America. (At least they are the essence in recent years, after the historically favored groups have gotten theirs and largely arranged things so they can keep it.)

Americans find it hard to rest easy with such exceptions to principle—whether they be malignant ones like slavery and Jim Crow, or a benignly intended one like affirmative action. In the case of affirmative action, toleration could be sustained only as long as the sense of it as compensatory justice—not political entitlement—could be kept alive. When that sense evaporated, so did the support.

So what is to be done?

Not much, I suspect. President Bill Clinton may, with his present review of affirmative action programs, find a way to split the difference and cool the passions surrounding this issue. But I doubt it.

The fact is that an era is ending, the latest thirty-year window of opportunity for black folks in America. Affirmative action, I suspect, will end with it. I say that not happily, but resignedly.

For black people, the loss will be more symbolic than substantive. To be sure, affirmative action has wrought some genuine successes—I count my own education and career among them. But overall, in terms of bringing black people to parity with whites, it has not overwhelmed.

In the most important sense, affirmative action has always been more a spirit and a disposition than a program or a policy. It is that spirit that needs to survive. For the sake of America's soul, that spirit *must* survive. □

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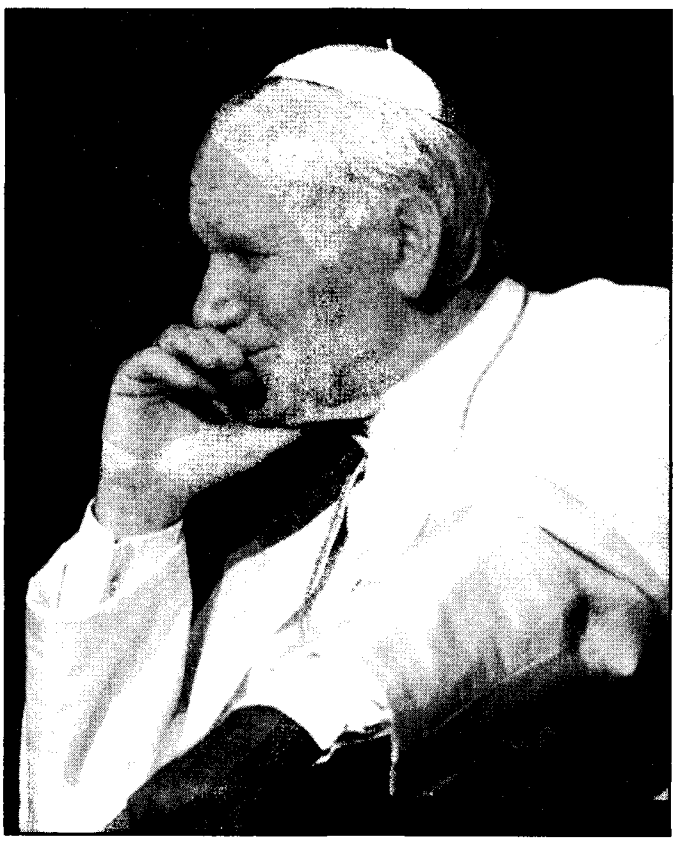

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JOHN LOGAN'S 'CONFESSIONS'

A POET EVER RESTLESS

HAROLD ISBELL

Although the name of John Logan (1923–87) is not widely known outside the community of American poets, he was—and remains to this day—very well regarded by his contemporaries. Indeed, he was a poet's poet. James Dickey said of Logan's poetry: "Yes, this is what poetry can sometimes do; this is what it can sometimes be." More than twenty years later, Robert Bly was equally emphatic: "John Logan is one of the five or six finest poets to emerge in the United States in the last decades. He has won a position of considerable respect without the help of the major schools or their magazines."

Bly wrote, in a memorial piece, "John Logan was a master of sound. In an age when most poetry is written for the page, that is, mumbled, on the page and in the air, John Logan's work with sound is awesome." His work has also enjoyed the critical approval of writers as diverse as Marvin Bell, Dudley Fitts, Stanley Kunitz, William Dickey, and Donald Hall.

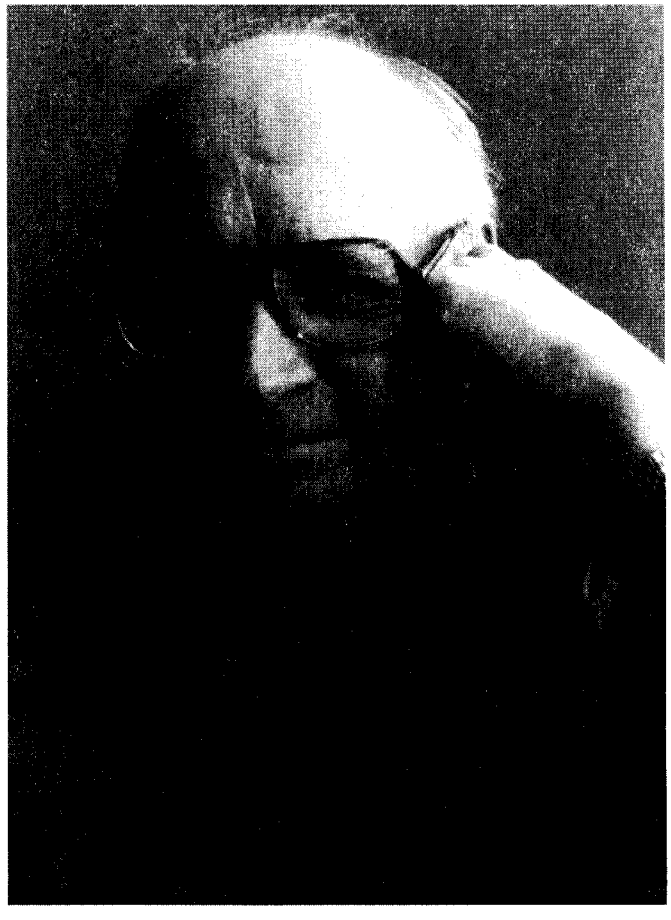
Logan's *Collected Poems* and *Collected Fiction*, both of which were published after his death, remain in print and there are plans to publish a collection of his nonfiction prose. From 1956 to 1960 he published five reviews and a number of poems in *Commonweal*. His first five books of poems were also reviewed in *Commonweal* between 1955 and 1974.

His career ended as his life sank into the disabilities of alcoholism and, finally, two strokes. His last years were haunted by the pain of failed love and friendship, as well as the grim recognition that over the years he had conferred grief on others while attempting to accommodate the conflicting demands of his own sexuality. At the same time he was never free of an overriding fear of loneliness and isolation. Yet there had been joy and good times.

He nurtured other poets with a magnificent generosity, often, I suspect, to the detriment of his own career. In 1961, he and Aaron Siskind, the photographer, founded *Chicago Choice* (later, *CHOICE* magazine) which Logan edited until its demise in 1980. For a few years, he was poetry editor for the *Nation* and the *Critic*. Looking back, his editorial taste seems remarkably prescient for having identified major poets of our own time.

When he died in 1987, John Logan had published twelve books of poems and three books of short stories, essays, reviews, and interviews. His last book, *Manhattan Movements: Poems 1981–87*, was in manuscript and was later published in 1989 by his executors as the concluding section of *John Logan: The Collected Poems*. For most of his adult life Logan was an academic, teaching with distinction and a wonderful erudition, first at Saint John's College in Annapolis, then the University of Notre Dame, then Saint Mary's College in California, and, finally, as a full professor, at the State University of New York, Buffalo.

In the thirty years I knew him, especially after I had become a graduate student at Notre Dame and a frequent guest in his family's home, his reputation as a teacher was outstanding. His



HAROLD ISBELL's *translation of* Ovid: Heroides *is available from Penguin Books. He lives in San Francisco.*

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first book, *Cycle for Mother Cabrini*, was published in 1955 by Grove Press, a major publication for a young, obscure poet. Its easy mix of a traditional and even pious religious sensibility with an intensely felt awareness of the flesh and its weakness won an immediate, though sometimes slightly puzzled, audience. Like the later work, *Cycle* was heavily influenced by Saint Augustine and the *Confessions*, the admission by an aging Augustine of his own dismal failures set in the context of the infinite providential mercy of God.

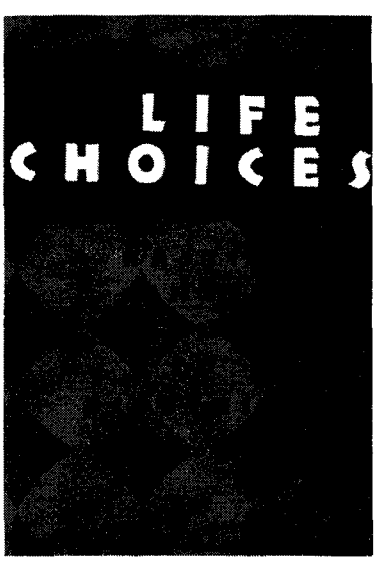
Logan came to the Catholic church when he married and when that marriage ended he left the regular practice of Catholicism. During those early years, he read widely and deeply in the primary theological texts, especially of the mystical tradition. In a 1961 interview Logan said, "I think the essential impulse to poetry—the desire to hold in one's arms the beauties not yet created, as Stephen Dedalus puts it—is religious." In an interview in 1968 he said, "I'm not religious in any dogmatic sense at all...but I am more interested in poetry than I ever was before." Yet echoes of his earlier Catholicism are in his work right up to the end of his life.

The major poem from that first book is an account of a visit to the shrine in New York City of the recently canonized Mother Francis Xavier Cabrini. As the narrator, the *persona* adopted by Logan the poet, observes the various details of the shrine, the displayed body of the saint, the lines of people, school children as well as adults, and as his vision then moves away from the shrine to a consideration of the facts of the saint's life, he begins a lengthy meditation on the nature of sanctity and that displayed flesh, now fallen and decayed, that will rise again, whole, at the end of the world.

Logan presents in the opening lines of this long poem a theme central to his work:

> I thank God Mother Cabrini's
> Body is subject to laws
> Of decay. To me it is
> A disservice when flesh
>
> Will not fall from bones
> As God for His glory
> Sometimes allows. I say this
> For flesh is my failing:
>
> That it shall fall is my
> Salvation. That it shall not
> Conquer is my blind hope.
> That it shall rise again
>
> Commanding, is my fear.
> That it shall rise changed
> Is my faith....

This poem teases as it takes the reader from the general to the particular and back again. From a consideration of that flesh common to all of humanity the poet turns to his own flesh. This playfulness, this ready verbal wit was characteristic of Logan's poetry.



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In December 1961, Logan visited another shrine of Mother Cabrini, this at the place of her death in Chicago. In the earlier poem he had rejoiced at the triumphant humility, the sanctity, of the woman whose heroic virtue was being celebrated. In "Revisit to the Room of a Saint," included in his third book, Logan is humbled by the saint's final hours, the smallness and the insignificance of the very ordinary items which had surrounded her. These, simplest of things, find a stunning contrast in the poem's exultant conclusion:

> White doves wound above the field at her birth.
> Now wine, gold, and turquoise doves
> rise surely for her death. Their tissue wings
> thin and lucid as her light hands
> make a light wind.
> Let it breathe on my hidden face
> as my beast
> kneels a moment in this child's place.

Logan's first book included the poem "Prologue and Questions for Saint Augustine: On His Sixteenth Centenary." Like most of Logan's earlier work, this poem has received little critical attention. In many ways the poem intimidates. It uses the elegiac mode to address a saint who had been, until his radical conversion, a notorious sinner. It is not a simple poem, but then Augustine's life was not simple. And though Logan here finds in Augustine a paradigm for his own life, as time passed the paradigm would be less and less relevant.

The poem contains a series of questions propounded as riddle upon riddle without answer. The subject matter is the contradictory nature of life itself, the mystery of why one's highest intentions can be so confounded by the twists and turns of actual choices. By the rhetorical device of piling question upon question, Logan details in a whirlwind of allusion the potential for intellectual paralysis that he saw in the mind of Augustine, a mind which Logan well knew was the product of both Cicero and Plotinus. Before progressing to comment on the outcome, he says, in a marvelous display of alliteration and rhyme,

> Your mind hung in the hell
> Of minds the tor-
> Tured and tumescent
> Intellect, unrested....

For Augustine, known to later generations as "Doctor of Grace," the only answer to this existential quandary, a viable reconciliation of the intellect's need for knowledge and truth with the body's need for sensual gratification, was a theology centered on the mysteries of grace and salvation. And for Logan, who had not enjoyed the grace of a radical conversion, an appropriate answer to the same question would require other, more ordinary agents of interior reconciliation.

The poem typifies much of Logan's earlier poetry. Its richly allusive texture makes abundant reference to the literary and graphic arts of the last sixteen hundred years while it also gives evidence of a thorough grounding in the texts of Augustine. Logan demonstrates that the saint and his autobiography are central to the work and the imaginations of artists ever since.

During the years Logan taught at Notre Dame, Augustine's *Confessions*—in the translation by Frank Sheed—and *The City of God* were central features of his seminars. For Logan these were not books read once by a young man and then remembered through the passing years with fondness. On the contrary, over a period of about ten years, and with each new class, he read and reread both and they were the bases of many lectures and discussions.

In this early poem the first of two references to the *Confessions* occurs in the epigraph, which Logan quotes from the Latin prose of Book X:30, and which I translate: "Images of my former actions are set firmly in my memory, a faculty which I have discussed elsewhere in very great detail. Even now, these images buffet me." This statement is significant to an understanding of the Logan who reveals himself in his poems, much as Augustine revealed himself in the *Confessions*. A second reference to the *Confessions* occurs later with the image of the dark wood overrun by menacing beasts, placing the poem also in the tradition of Dante's *Commedia*. Having asserted—with Augustine—the role of sensory memory in the progress of his life, the poet veers away from any further attention to the idea so that what remains unsaid is almost as important as what is said. The poem is cast as a quite disarming, familiar, address to Augustine, even to the extent of using an English variant of the saint's name in the opening lines:

> Austin you write all
> Our lives and Petrarch
> Was sensible to keep you
> All his later years
> Beside his heart; I too
>
> Have loved this book
> Over any other
> Have held it in my hand
> Long times: have been its author.

Harold Isbell's critical essay on John Logan is another in our series of articles on contemporary Catholic writers. We have asked our essayists to give an overview of the author's work, showing our readers where and how this writer locates the central human drama, the big questions, the religious crisis of our time. What does the Catholic sensibility of John Logan tell us about our common world, about the state of our souls? The most recently published article in the series was written by Edwin T. Arnold on Cormac McCarthy (November 4, 1994).

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But the degree of Logan's identification with Augustine must be carefully understood. The tone of familiarity is initially suggested by the diminutive form of the name, a form more commonly given to another saint, Augustine of Canterbury. Furthermore, the use of "sensible" in the third line has the ring of a faint archaism evoking in my ear an old-fashioned and entirely desirable wisdom. The poem echoes Augustine with whispered ambiguity, and while it strongly invokes the Augustinian heritage, it seems to caution against a too rigid reliance on that tradition.

Books discussed in this essay

John Logan: The Collected Poems, *BOA Editions Limited, 92 Park Avenue, Brockport, New York 14420, $15, 499 pp.*

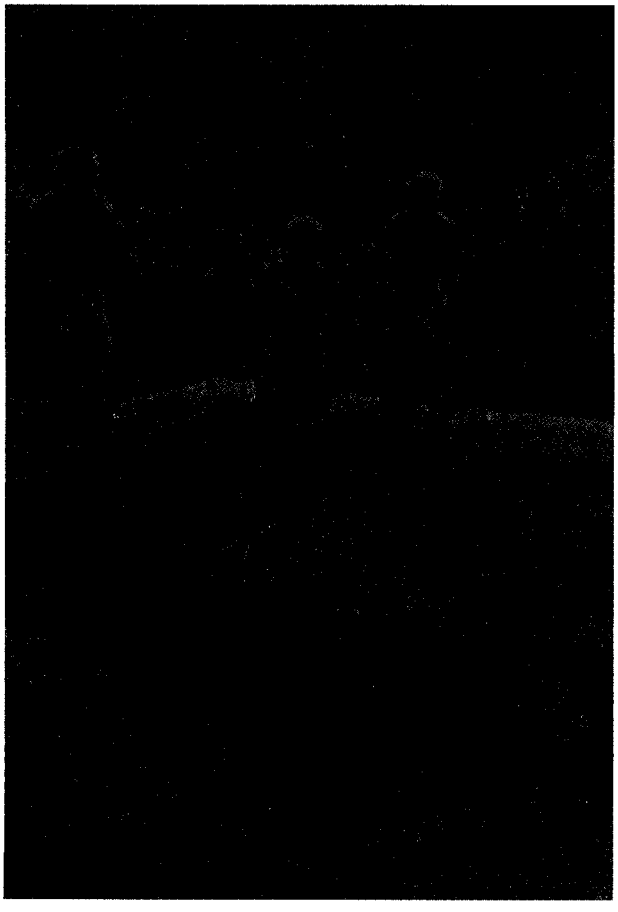
John Logan: The Collected Fiction, *BOA Editions Limited, 92 Park Avenue, Brockport, New York 14420, $12.50, 204 pp.*

Logan's second book, *Ghosts of the Heart: New Poems* (1960), used four epigraphs, the first from the writings of Mother Cabrini, followed by passages from Pirandello, Melville, and Joyce. The latter three were variations on the idea that every human being is a composite of many personalities, each manifesting different, if not opposed, characteristics. But the epigraph from Mother Cabrini seems curiously tangential to the other three: "Contradictions—there is a really sharp hair shirt! There is a penance which has made saints and which everyone can practice."

At first glance it seems that the lines from Mother Cabrini do not really belong. But then one remembers that she is writing from a lifelong practice of what Logan hopes to acquire, that traditional, anchoring, Christian spirituality which nevertheless finds much of its substance in Saint Paul: "That which I would, I do not; that which I would not, that I do." In other words, a major source of contradiction for every individual resides in the confusing complexity of the individual personality which can reveal a nearly infinite potential for conflicting ambition and necessity.

Logan wrote in 1981 about a second visit to the Cabrini shrine in New York, now housed in a separate chapel. As a matter of fact, the title poems of his first and last collections were both the result of visits to this shrine. While the later poem necessarily invites comparison to the earlier *Cycle for Mother Cabrini*, it is clearly the work of an older and changed man.

In the earlier poem the poet confronted the saint's mortality with little or no antidote for his own terror at the prospect of mortality beyond a hope for salvation. And even that hope is qualified by a very Augustinian wish to be saved, but, like Augustine, "not yet, O Lord." In the later poem the fact of human



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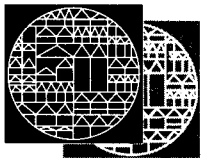

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mortality manifest in the enshrined body of the saint is sharply mitigated by other, perhaps more pressing, facts of friendship, companionship, the medieval splendors of The Cloisters—only a short walk from the shrine of Mother Cabrini—the beauty of a show of photographs, the simple joys of wine and dinner with old friends, and finally the recognition of a pleasing beauty in his sleeping younger companion.

Logan's poems are driven by a restlessness of the heart and the opening lines of the *Confessions* are significant to an understanding of them: "...we are made for you, O Lord; our hearts are not at peace until they take rest in you." Always hungry for the satisfactions of beauty, Logan leads his reader through darkness and light until both poet and reader, like Augustine and Dante, achieve a garden of rest, a measure of order composed in chaos.

But while Augustine addressed his *Confessions* to God and professed to find salvation in God's transcendent grace to the exclusion of all creatures, Logan went his own way, addressing others—heroes, readers, friends, and family—finding at least some degree of salvation in the beauty of created things. For Augustine, sensation and sensory memory were dangerous obstacles to the life of grace. For Logan's later poems, these two functions were the human condition.

Logan, near the end of life, came back to his earlier preoccupations with shame, guilt, and innocence. With no explicit reference to Augustine, he addressed a series of long poems to the people nearest him. A recital of events encompassing the most startling juxtapositions of pain and joy, they are a plea for forgiveness, a repeated *mea culpa*. As I read these later poems I remember the earlier poems and I cannot help recalling a short passage in Augustine's *The City of God*: "The peace of all things is the tranquillity of order." For Augustine, this described every kind of peace—personal, social, civil, and moral—and finally describes the universe as well as the creator of the universe. And where, for Logan, was the order? I would suggest that it was the resplendent order of the poetic form into which he cast these bits and pieces of his life.

The Collected Poems span a period of some thirty-five years. They are charged by ambivalence, an overriding hope for salvation tempered by longing for the necessarily forbidden. This crisis, this juxtaposition of the ascetic and the sensual in the earliest poems, provided the spark which kindled his later work. And for those who knew John Logan, this tension, so easily and gracefully stated in the poems, delineates the distinctive and at times exasperating features of his personality. Logan, both man and *persona*, saw his best intentions too often frustrated.

In one of his last poems, "Letter to My Son" (1985), he speaks with pride of his son's achievement and with sadness of his own failure to provide an appropriately generous affection:

> I knew you wanted to live with me,
> but I was too selfish—too jealous of my lifestyle
> which included a lot of drinking and other men.
> ...I offered

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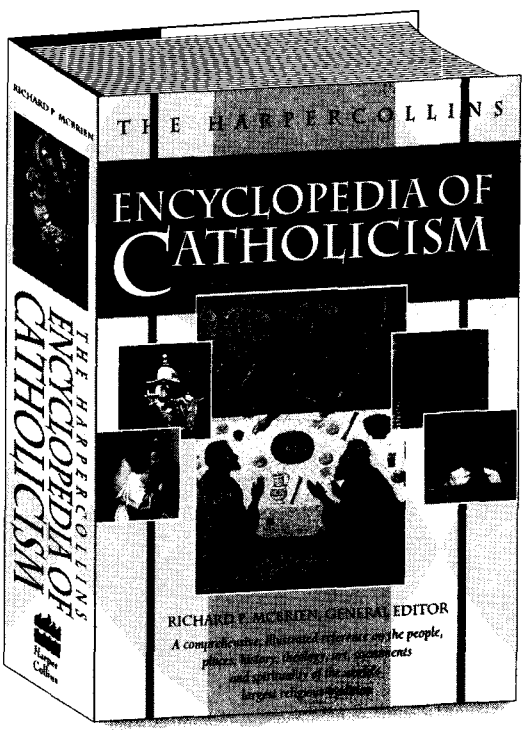

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money (stingily I am afraid), but you said no,
"Just take me to dinner once in a while." I was a
real shit, I confess, not much help...
I would give anything now if I could change that time
and be a help to you, my son.

With the suggestion of sexual indulgence—in this case homosexual—the pathos of the poem moves dangerously close to the maudlin. But it is the pathos of a life once lived, never to be retrieved, never to be made right. It is the pathos of opportunity lost to a deficiency of thought and care.

Like every life, Logan's was a mix of oppositions, of injury and forgiveness, an unsatisfactory manifestation of the failures to which we can be victim and the joys so desperately sought but only sometimes gained. This neither excuses the failure nor ignores the joy so much as it tries to say that his life was entirely human. Out of such a profound, even chilling, paradox—the paradox which sees in the flesh the reality of both death and salvation, chaos contending with order—he made a wonderfully rich and precious work, a work to be read and read again. □

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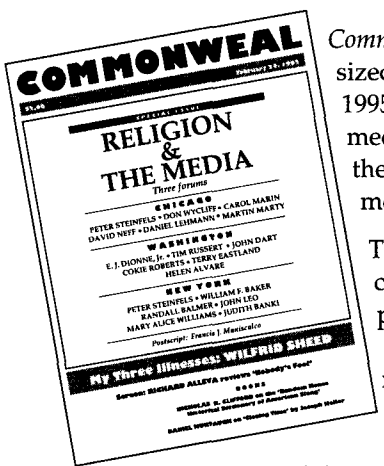
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SCREEN

FOUNDERING FATHER?

'JEFFERSON IN PARIS'

In thirty years of collaboration, producer Ismael Merchant, director James Ivory, and writer Ruth Prawer Jhabvala have created twenty-odd films, the best of which (*Mr. and Mrs. Bridge, Shakespeare Wallah*, their three E.M. Forster adaptations, and, best of the best, *The Remains of the Day*) have worked on the viewer like cinematic concentrates. Tightly structured, emotionally low-keyed, handsome but without spectacle or special effects, they linger in the mind long after viewing, expand, provoke discussion, become satisfying memories. Now, working with a much bigger budget (courtesy of Touchstone Pictures), they have produced *Jefferson in Paris*. And they have foundered. The money hasn't been spent on enriching a story but on stuffing it full of unassimilated research.

You can see what attracted the filmmaking team to this project. Jefferson, the Mona Lisa of American history, is, in their view, a man who deliberately repressed his deeper emotions and fit his life to a precise pattern. Drawn to an attractive and emotionally free-spending woman, he struggles to express his own emotions until circumstances and his own limitations drive him back into his shell. Whether or not this characterization captures the real Jefferson, it is certainly a reprise of Stevens, the butler-hero of *The Remains of the Day*. The inner journey of each is essentially the same.

But, of course, Merchant-Ivory's Thomas Jefferson, anyone's Thomas Jefferson, is not a servant of a rigid social order but a statesman, an architect, a political theorist, a future president, a landowner and slaveholder, and—in the period dealt with here—a diplomat to a France teetering on the brink of Europe's most momentous revolution. To succeed, the movie had to show Jefferson's emotional travails interacting decisively with the traumas of history.

It doesn't. For one thing, Jhabvala's script is primarily concerned with the widowed slaveowner's relationship with Sally Hemings, the black girl (not yet sixteen when she reputedly became pregnant by Jefferson) who was certainly his property

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and perhaps the mother of several of his children. (Historians haven't reached agreement.) In fact, the film opens with a journalist's visit (in 1873) to the Ohio homestead of Sally's son to investigate that man's claim to be the third president's son. The script then flashes back to the French court and Sally doesn't show up till midway in the movie. Though the theme of slave-holding reality vs. Jeffersonian idealism is announced by giving Sally's brother a few restive moments, the bulk of *Jefferson*'s first half treats of the ambassador's affair-of-the-heart with Maria Cosway, the wife of a homosexual artist and herself a skilled painter. This romance is aborted by Jefferson's promise to his daughter, Patsy, not to remarry. Jhabvala seems to share the view of historian Page Smith that Jefferson's break with Maria led him to Sally as an outlet for his sexual and emotional neediness. Thus, *Jefferson in Paris* works out the destiny that will lead him back to Monticello's isolated, slavery-serviced splendor on a hill.

So there is a certain unity and logic to this story, but the story itself is buried under research. After all, since it all takes place at the doomed French court, how could the moviemakers bypass the time-tourist opportunities? We glimpse Marie Antoinette's unpopularity with her people, the inability of the American Congress to repay French veterans, Camille Desmoulins's rabble-rousing, Louis XVI's political and sexual impotence, Mesmer's hypnotic experiments on noble women, the assembly of the third estate, the events leading up to the Tennis Court Oath. None of which has anything to do with Jefferson's troubles with American slavery and Sally Hemings.

Worse still, Jefferson, mostly a mere observer of the French uprisings, must narrate them in letters to his secretary (home in the States). So the designated protagonist becomes a voice on the soundtrack; the center of the story drifts to the periphery. It's dramatically ruinous.

Jhabvala sometimes incorporates passages from Jefferson's letters into the dialogue. She even lifts Jefferson's thoughts to Madison about "earth belongs always to the living..." and plants them in a love exchange between Maria and our hero. The transplant doesn't work. Neither does changing Jefferson's formal and witty "Dialogue between the Head and the Heart" into a improvised exchange among courtiers. The epistolary voice doesn't lend itself to dialogue.

And for all the bustle on screen, there is really very little to please the eye of the viewer. The photography is dark and dingy. Jefferson, though morally disapproving of court life, was sensually entranced by it. But the movie doesn't make us feel this because our senses remain unravished throughout.

Only in the very last scenes does the movie begin to focus on something: the pathetic absurdity of Sally Hemings's place in the Jefferson household. For some mild familiarity her face is slapped by Patsy Jefferson. It's one teen-aged girl slapping another, a mistress slapping her slave, and a girl slapping her own aunt: for Sally is the illegitimate daughter of Patsy's grandfather, Thomas's father-in-law. Not only do we know this but both girls know it, too.

And the final moment is poignant: Sally, offered her freedom, bursts into tears because she is bewildered, even terrified, by the possibility of freedom in a land that has no use for free blacks. But, by this time, it is too late to make this movie be about Sally. The last close-up of her tear-stained face is moving but frustrating. It's a fragment of a movie we haven't seen.

Nick Nolte's portrayal of Jefferson is a rough sketch of what might have been a good performance. He never got to the stage where he understood how this eighteenth-century genius moved and talked. His restraint isn't the character's restraint but the diffidence of an actor still finding his way. Greta Scacchi, always underrated as an actress just because she is a sexy-looking woman, makes Marie understandable and attractive, in so far as the script allows her. The same goes for Thandie Newton's Sally. Newton adroitly reveals that "dashing Sally" had to put on an act for her owners in order to ensure her position as a sort of mascot. But the script doesn't allow this promising actress enough opportunities to counterpoint the cuteness with the calculation manufacturing the cuteness.

There are successful biographical films that play fast and loose with facts in order to transform history into myth or romance (*Young Mr. Lincoln*, *Lawrence of Arabia*). There are also movies that by scrupulously mixing facts with tactful invention seem to transport us into a very real, profoundly felt past (Passolini's *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, the uneven but stirring *Gettysburg*.) *Jefferson in Paris* belongs to neither group. It is a well-dressed, well-researched corpse.

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POEMS
Joan I. Siegel

My Mother at Eighty-One

Fear
is the blue shadow
under her eyes
where the skin is fragile
as the porcelain teacup
I broke years ago.

Her voice
floats on top of her breath
making the sound a bird makes with its wings
just before it dives into the air.

In the end
she will lock the door to us
and go off alone.

Memorial

All day the argument froths at her lips.

If he were still here
he'd wait for her at the door
while she checked the gas range
one more time.
Then he'd get the car.

The grave is wide as a double bed.
The headboard is granite.
She shakes her fist at him
and her voice cracks like the sound
of someone shaking out crisp sheets.

Dance of the Sanderlings

The sea's rhythm
keeps them in step
and balanced
on this edge of treachery.

All morning
they dance to the surf
looking like a corps de ballet
well-rehearsed in their choreography
stepping quickly into the ebb tide
to drill for bits of food tossed out by the sea
benign as an old woman feeding pigeons at the park
and race back just in time
before the next flow drags them under
and cracks their legs like twigs.

Later

My mother's voice stretches thin
as the telephone wires
strung between our houses:

I close my eyes
and it is already that other time
when her voice will come to me
from far away
and I will reach for the phone
to dial her number and no one will answer
or it will be a stranger's voice
and all night I will run through dark streets
trying to find her house
the right door
the key that fell through a hole in my pocket

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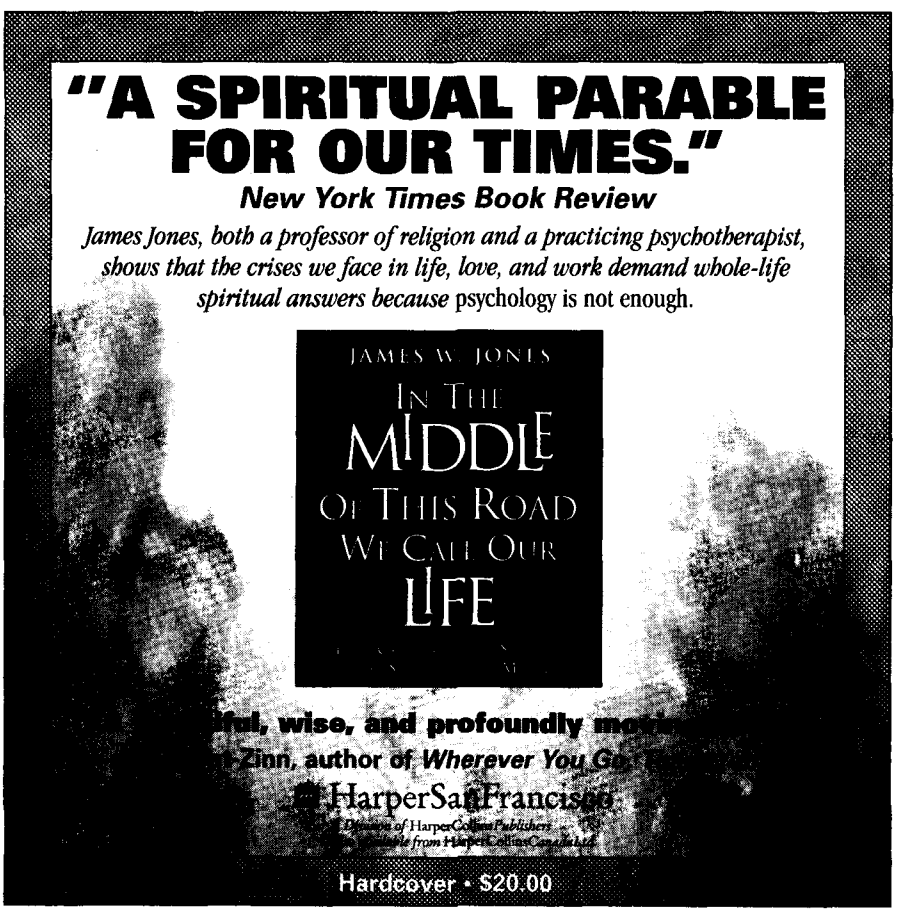
Who, what, where, when, but why?

PAUL ELIE

Surveys say that not many journalists go to church, but lately an awful lot of journalists have written books about going to church. As it happens, they are not journalists who habitually go to church themselves. Rather, they are prodigals who come back to church on a trial basis after years away; or they are outsiders who enter into the "experience" of church for a limited time only in the hope of discovering why people would go to church without a writing assignment to lure them there.

To come to such books as a journalist and a habitual churchgoer myself is to despair at how contrived these works are, and at the way the authors and their publishers embrace the contrivances as the heart and soul of the books. The setup is more or less as follows. The journalist introduces himself or herself as a person who writes on assignment—magazine articles, book contracts—and who has practiced journalistic standards of detachment and skepticism until they have become habits of character. In paying an extended visit to church, though, the journalist is not just reporting on a subject; this time out, he is also on a spiritual quest, an encounter with religion as such, in which his journalist's values will be put to the test. Whether or not the spiritual quest is genuine, it is a very useful device for the journalist. It lends drama to the proceedings, giving the work the shape of a wrestling with the angel. At the same time it assures the presumably secular reader that he or she is in the company of a like-minded soul, one who is wary of religion and who, being a good journalist, will be properly skeptical of church people and their doings.

The many recent books of this sort will be familiar to *Commonweal* readers, for although they are cast as reports filed from the religious front and meant for the secular reader, I suspect that in fact most of their readers are church people themselves. I have not read Dan Wakefield's *Returning* (Penguin, 1989), but an Easter Sunday magazine excerpt left me feeling warm inside. Three books that followed it—Patricia Hampl's *Virgin Time* (Ballantine, 1993), Ari L. Goldman's *The Search for God at Harvard* (Bantam, 1992), and Samuel G. Freedman's *Upon This Rock: The Miracles of a Black Church* (HarperCollins, 1993)—worked popular variations on what sociologists call the participant-observer method, and all three were weakened by the authors' struggles to sort out their motives for being in church. Freedman was so determined to portray the Rev. Johnny Ray Youngblood's Brooklyn congregation as an uplifting example of black life that he sidestepped hard questions about the congregation as an example of Christian life. Hampl, who strictly speaking is more poet than journalist, tried to reduce Catholicism to a very personal poetry of the spirit, and Catholicism resisted. Goldman wrote movingly about his conflicts as a modern Orthodox Jew, but depicted the Christians he met at Harvard Divinity School as a gallery of grotesques: the political radical, the les-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Book discussed in this essay

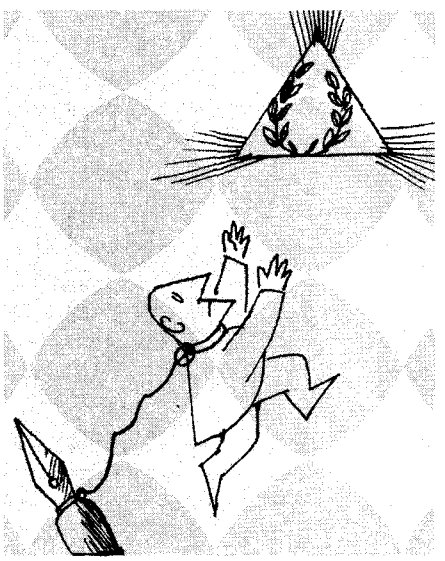
Congregation, *by Gary Dorsey, Viking, $24.95 388 pp.*

bian, the person of color, and so on.

Now, there is nothing wrong with journalists having mixed motives in going to church. God writes straight with crooked lines, and so do great artists. The problem is that these writers (except Freedman at his best), having elevated the impulses that led them to church to the order of a spiritual quest, lack the religious vocabulary and habits of mind that would enable them to make sense of the experience. They find that the journalistic approach isn't adequate to their experience of church—which is no surprise, for it was their sense of the limits of journalism that led them to church in the first place. They find that Christianity is more complicated than they had supposed—but they are on deadline, and don't have the time or the inclination to undertake ongoing training in Christianity. They have set themselves up on the road to Damascus with nothing to guide them but last week's magazines. One can hardly blame them for their predicament, for arguably it was the task of the Christians they met to train them in Christianity. But one can wish that these writers had felt obligated to become as knowledgeable about Christianity as they would have become about baseball, or economics, or foreign policy if that were their subject.

The two best recent books in which a journalist pays a visit to church are those in which the journalist's relationship to the church and its beliefs is clearest. To write *In Mysterious Ways: The Life and Death of a Parish Priest* (Avon, 1992), Paul Wilkes contacted the Archdiocese of Boston, "asking to be put into contact with any priests who were suffering a life-threatening illness and faced imminent death. My idea was to do a documentary film and a book—a modern-day corollary to Georges Bernanos's spiritual classic, *The Diary of a Country Priest*—following a parish priest as he lived his last days." It takes your breath away: he is going to exploit a dying stranger for the sake of a literary parallel! Fortunately, Wilkes was put in touch with Father Joe Greer, a charming man who fought cancer but lived to lead his parish again. Depicting this priest, Wilkes all but closed the gaps between observer and participant, journalist and co-religionist, for he was able to draw on his knowledge of Catholicism and his lifetime of experience in New England parishes. The contrived structure of his project fell away, replaced by writing that had real empathy and authority.

Mike Bryan hoped to keep the gap between journalist and believer as wide as possible. He was a journeyman writer and an unreflective liberal when he enrolled in Criswell College, a seminary allied with First Baptist Church in Dallas, in order to write *Chapter and Verse: A Skeptic Revisits Christianity* (Penguin, 1992). The



book begins as a predictable look at Evangelical culture in the state where, as Bill Moyers once said, there are more Baptists than there are people. As Bryan discovered, however, evangelicalism resists being reduced to its culture, and insists on confronting the skeptic with its claims about the Lord Jesus Christ. "We have to insist on the Cross and Resurrection as the starting point for people coming to the Lord," the seminary's president told Bryan, hoping to convert him as he would anyone else. Bryan wanted to write a book about Evangelicals; they wanted for him to be born again. So Bryan was forced to ask himself what he believed. Why was the world made? What is man's purpose? He was a quick study, and soon he was reading William James and Elaine Pagels with the Evangelicals' critiques of them lodged in his brain. He never quite forfeited his journalist's detachment, nor was he born again; but the Baptists' frank and clear faith led him to reckon seriously with Christianity, and turned his book project into an authentic spiritual quest.

There is probably no church in America less like First Baptist Dallas than the First Church in Windsor, Connecticut. When Gary Dorsey joins the community at the beginning of *Congregation* (Viking, $24.95, 388 pp.), it is a 360-year-old church of the United Church of Christ, once Congregationalist, "a place of hard pews and stale air" like hundreds of other mainline churches in New England. Its membership is affluent but aging, its church building is treasured but in need of new clapboards and a fresh coat of paint, and its finance committee is about to begin a million-dollar capital fund drive that it sees as a referendum on the church's prospects for the next century.

If First Church is a typical mainline congregation, Dorsey is a typical journalist on a visit to church, and he makes this fact the organizing principle of his book. He begins by assuring his readers that he won't subject them to a preachy conversion narrative. He is just a journalist. "I have no interest in 'ancestor worship,' no regard for religion's frozen bolts of paradox or biblical injunctions chiseled in stone," he declares. "Probably like you, I am mostly curious, oblique, undisciplined, largely unoriginal." Then he gives account of his supposedly unoriginal religious experience. "Born and baptized Protestant, I became an agnostic, turned mystic, self-actualized, individuated, joined the Quakers, opted out—the usual course for my generation in the American psychoreligious carnival."

An ordinary man and an ordinary journalist, he comes to First Church because he seeks an ordinary church for his book. But not just that: like those who have gone before him, he seeks a context for his encounter with religion as such. As he seeks, so he finds. In the course of things, he will

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see First Church as everything *but* a church. It is a "Sunday-morning roadhouse," one of America's "original shrines of folk art." It is an "erotic place," a "place of uncommon intimacy," of "connection and dependence." It is "a small place where wonder [is] familiar."

There is a facile straining for the transcendent in these formulations. They are cast in the "spiritual" vocabulary of a person who is unfamiliar with the hard sociological explanations for why people go to church and who is wary of the religious ones (those bolts of paradox and biblical injunctions). They are attempts to retrofit the language of an observer so that it describes the experience of a participant. They are meant to inspire and edify, to quicken the pulse, to open the reader's heart, if only for a few hours, to the elusive charms of religion as such.

In fact, they make *Congregation* a dully ordinary book. But it is a honest book and one with its own small fascinations, and these have to do with its ordinariness. For Dorsey unwittingly makes clear how thoroughly the congregation he is writing about shares his outlook. At First Church, the experience of church is a reckoning with religion as such, and the participant-observer approach is the closest thing there is to a public theology, as fundamental to church life as the hymns and the coffee hour.

> The congregation itself comes straight from central casting: Suddenly they came striding across the yard, dodging traffic in the street, strolling through the cemetery, dressed in dark suits and woolly red-and-blue tartans: the old guard, a batch of newcomers wearing boutonnieres, widowers and newlyweds, alcoholics and mothers of alcoholics, winners in the stock market, women battling breast cancer, men fighting mental illness, successful doctors, lawyers, accountants, engineers, husbands without jobs, a few former ministers, a solitary stranger whose wife had died just the day before.

Seen from afar, they have an austere dignity, these modern sufferers of quiet desperation. From up close, they are more often depicted as objects of Chaplinesque entertainment, latter-day Puritans who mock themselves as "God's Frozen People." Lottie is "a dutiful silver-polisher." JoAnne shows up early for Sunday service to dance the Spirit into the empty church. Joan has a paganistic shrine in her attic—a photo of Planet Earth, a phallic "tree of life," a chime which she taps to produce the Universal Tone. No one in the congregation knows about it.

Or they are depicted as familiar characters in church life, like those George Judson portrayed in a series of articles about a similar church in the *New York Times* a few years ago. They are admired for the earnest, halting, doubtful nature of their religious commitments—that is, for the ways their reckonings with religion as

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such resemble those of the visiting journalist. The pastor, Van Parker, is an administrator who is weary of the trends that have swept through the church, a no-nonsense man for whom spirituality is "as mundane as ham and eggs." Minister John Gregory-Davis is the church radical, speaking truth to power on behalf of homeless men in Hartford while others split hairs over the proper terms for church restoration (not "re-siding" but "replacement of clapboards"). Another minister, Bill Warner-Prouty, is a Yale-educated intellectual whose job at First Church is "to stand aside until needed, like a reference book...always ready to open to the pages of one thick volume or another, highlighting opaque Old Testament stories and myths and academic texts that most people no longer really knew how to use anymore." By the end of the year he has resigned his ministry to become a schoolteacher.

Dorsey writes well in these passages, which are grounded in close observation with special attention paid to odd tics of character—the essentially anecdotal approach of the journalist. And he competently employs other devices common to books of this sort. The book is organized around the seasons of the church year: Holy Week, Pentecost, Advent, Epiphany. The fund drive is a running story. A number of organized encounters—a Bible study group, an inclusive language seminar, a visit to the church's roots in rural England, a healing service for gay men with AIDS—serve to open up the narrative and allow the church people, and Dorsey, to take account of broader trends in Christianity today. And from time to time Dorsey touches on the troubles in his marriage, as he and his wife learn that they cannot conceive children. It is one of the saddest aspects of the book that in a situation that demands real spiritual searching, they search separately—he at First Church, she at a Quaker meeting.

Whether in a finance committee meeting or on the bus trip through the West Country, the members of the congregation are moved to ask themselves and one another just why they are church people after all. Dorsey dutifully records their questions, sometimes in their voices, sometimes in his own: "Where is God in all this?" "What am I still doing in a place like this?" They are questions that occur to the reader again and again as well. The members of First Church are clearly committed to it, and the checks they write for the fund drive testify to their commitment. But what brings them there, and keeps them coming? Christian faith? Social cachet? Tradition? Community?

All of these elements, of course, are in play in the life of any church, and the differences from one church to the next have to do, in part, with the degrees of stress given to the different aspects of religious experience. At First Church, *Congregation* suggests, what predominates among the congregation is a felt need for the apparatus of religion as such—not the truths and consolations of particular doctrines, not an encounter with the divine in worship, but a context in which the congregants' spiritual gropings are sponsored and considered valid.

It becomes clear just how vexed and attenuated such an emphasis can be in Dorsey's depiction of JoAnne Taylor, a "spiritual director" who is charged with fostering the inner life of the church. JoAnne's qualifications for the role are various: she led a children's ministry at a local church, spent some time in South America, completed a program in spiritual direction at the Shalem Institute, had a "crisis of the spirit," and offered her services to First Church around the time her book on the spiritual life of children was published. On the surface her approach is that of the smug and reductionistic post-Christian intellectual who aims to dismember the dead formulae of traditions.

"JoAnne," Dorsey writes, "wanted to shift the focus from morality, piety, judgment, and psychoanalysis, to peace, justice, and daily practice." She sees herself as "undoing an epidemic of bad theology." She sees the church as "not just an institution, but an institution that works against the spirit." Accordingly, she restricts her ministry to personal and confidential sessions with church members, and practices "a gentle detachment" from the church's institutional life—attending worship rarely, avoiding committees and daily "scut work," and feeling glad that her Jaguar is in the garage of her "middle-class" home the day the finance committee visits.

JoAnne, in short, strikes the reader as the sort of person who is more interested in dismantling Christianity than in building up an explicitly Christian community. But the members of First Church embrace her as "a person who could produce a well in dry souls." Before long Dorsey himself signs on, and after a few meetings in which they analyze his childhood views of church, he sees her as "a loving spiritual director" who is vital to his ongoing spiritual quest.

This is the participant-observer approach at its most twisted. As a participant in JoAnne's course in spiritual direction, Dorsey is required to observe his own relationship with religion as such. At the same time, as a journalist, he observes the process of spiritual direction, with a sharp eye for the manners of the participants. But for a number of reasons—his own semiliteracy in religious matters; the free-floating beliefs of the people he meets at First Church; and their shared notion that hand-wringing tentativeness is the mark of true religion—he never fully moves to the deeper level of observation in which he would analyze JoAnne's appeal and what it reveals about Christianity, and religion as such, as found in one Connecticut church.

The attempts to jump-start the Spirit at places like First Church have the makings of a fascinating story, and one rich in the themes of religious life and American life generally—the shifting relationships between sacred and secular, ancient and modern, discovery and commitment; the tensions between the strivings of the individual soul and the ways they are embodied in our common life; the impulse of each generation to make things new. That story is not to be found in *Congregation*, though, nor in the other journalists' accounts of their visits to church.

Maybe that is a story only the churches can tell, and only on Sundays. But one can wish that some journalist who makes a habit of going to church would write a book about it, one in which the gifts of the journalist and those of the believer were present in equal measures. That would be good news. □

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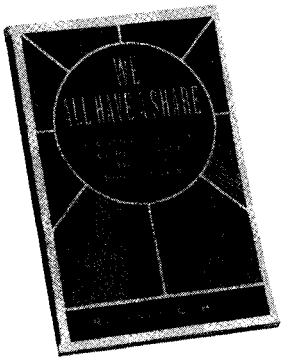

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THE UNDERGROUND STREAM
The Life and Art of Caroline Gordon
Nancylee Novell Jonza
University of Georgia Press, $34.95, 464 pp.

Robert Coles

This third biography of the novelist Caroline Gordon appears in the year that would have marked her 100th birthday. She died in Mexico fourteen years ago, a writer who authored nine novels, three short-story collections, but also constructed a literary and cultural personality. She was married to Allen Tate, the well-known poet and a founding member of the so-called Agrarians, a group of writers which included Robert Penn Warren, Andrew Lytle, and other Southern intellectuals who upheld the supposed virtues of the rural and small-town life, the yeomanry, as alternatives to the increasing shift toward urban experience and culture that took place all through the twentieth century.

Gordon knew, or was a close friend of, or tried to help many important writers of her time—Hart Crane, Ford Maddox Ford, Katherine Anne Porter, Edmund Wilson, Robert Lowell, and later in her life, Flannery O'Connor and Walker Percy. She was a passionate writer of letters, often sent to editors, reviewers, poets, and fellow novelists and short-story writers. She taught classes on many college campuses, lectured at still more of them. Her work earned her the admiration of critics, and she herself became an essayist very much respected for what she had to say about the writing and understanding of fiction.

Yet, as this biography makes eminently and sadly clear, all of her achievements and distinctions brought no great calm or self-confidence to a feisty, talented, fiercely determined, and exceedingly conscientious person who had every reason, at times, to feel herself overlooked, misjudged, unappreciated. Not that she didn't bend over backwards, at times (the continuing irony of the victim become self-accuser) to justify the treatment she received from an assortment of men, her husband certainly included.

In Gordon's later years she became increasingly conservative, deferred at least publicly to the authority and power of men in the intellectual world, and of course, in the world of the Catholic church, to which she was converted at the age of fifty-two. Below the surface of this cultural conservative, however, other forces and dispositions were at work (hence this book's title). This biographer, a writer of clear, evocative prose, probes that relatively unknown side of Gordon's life—especially her early years as an apprentice journalist in Chattanooga. There she encountered the obstacles women had to endure at a time in this nation's history when they couldn't even vote. There she did, as it is put in the South, "right well"—she used her bright, able mind, her persistence and ingenuity, her fluency to build a career as a newspaperwoman. Eventually, she left for the literary and political scene of Manhattan's Greenwich Village, where she would meet her future husband and so many other writers on their way up.

She and Allen Tate married because she was pregnant. They intended not to stay together after the baby (a girl, Nancy) was born, but they did end up living a life together, a hectic, unconventional, disturbed one. Much of this book chronicles in close and poignant detail the wildness, the sometime craziness of that relationship: much mutual respect and affection, no small amount of mutual suspicion, apprehension, distrust. They were married twice, divorced twice, and ultimately lived apart, but for over three decades, they tested mightily the psychological forces that kept them together and drove them apart—it was as if they couldn't live (comfortably, happily) with each other, but also couldn't live (without fear and anxiety) away from each other.

Much of Gordon's writing called upon the tensions and vicissitudes of her marriage. She was a novelist whose reportorial eyes and ears were always at work. She even sat her father down, got him telling tales, typed up what he said, and turned his remarks into the mainstay of one of her novels. She also worked her friend Dorothy Day into a novel, much to Day's displeasure. But more than anyone, Allen Tate became a subject of her fictional contemplation, sometimes quite sardonic, even as she relied heavily on him as a critic of her writing, and insisted upon a traditional role for herself as his endlessly supportive wife. In that regard, she was constantly taking care of things: a spirited, energetic housekeeper, cook, gardener, and hostess to the seemingly endless parade of guests who came to the Tates for dinners, but also to stay for a day, or

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weeks. They were a couple who apparently survived together only through the constant buffering companionship of others, and if those dozens and dozens of people were to be treated well, so that they would keep returning, Caroline Gordon had to labor long and hard.

I had heard of her years ago from two people who knew her, admired her—Dorothy Day and Walker Percy. Dorothy Day and Caroline Gordon were, actually, very much alike in certain respects. They both came from respectable Protestant families; both became journalists, then writers of fiction; both were unmarried when they became pregnant (in the 1920s, when that outcome was regarded as scandalous rather than as, today's view, an unexceptional event); both lived bohemian Manhattan lives; both converted to Catholicism; and both thereupon became wedded to the church's conservative views on moral issues. On the other hand, Dorothy Day, unlike Caroline Gordon, had a strong interest in political questions, and put herself on the line all the time on behalf of the poor. Neither of the Tates shared her kind of social and political passion. Theirs were lives given over to aesthetic preoccupations, and, very important, to teaching, whereby they made a living, of course, but also gave of themselves to others—especially so, Caroline Gordon.

Walker Percy often sang her praises, told me of those "single-spaced typed comments," pages and pages of them: a teacher willing to pour her heart and soul into another's struggle to create a fictional world. "She taught me so much in those letters," he kept saying—in fact, she spotted his great talent, his great message, too, before anyone else, perhaps, certainly the editors who first saw his writing and turned it down. This generosity of hers deserves mention, because the temptation these days for many of us is to see warts everywhere (in the convenient hindsight of history), to fault Caroline Gordon for failure to stand up for this or that cause, to immerse herself in a life of, say, politics and social struggle rather than literature.

It is all too easy, as well, for some of us now, with psychoanalysis and psychiatry as a secular religion, to arraign both Caroline Gordon and Allen Tate (and many of their writer friends) before that high court of clinical judgment that slaps labels taken from the language of psychopathology on anyone and everyone. No doubt both Tates were half out of their minds at times. She had a terrible temper, and experienced fits of depression. She drank too much. He was also a heavy drinker, maybe an alcoholic; and he could be smug, cold, devious, adulterous. Still, they were two earnestly dedicated writers who had a lot to say, who lived almost all their lives in near poverty, and who had a decent concern not only for themselves, but for many others.

I was upset, reproving as I read parts of this book—particularly so when I read of the way these two took care of their daughter (gave her over, often, to others for her upbringing). Somehow, though, that daughter (and many others, too) got so very much from this idiosyncratic, gifted couple, at times wildly out of control, constantly on the move, yet morally awake and self-scrutinizing. Caroline

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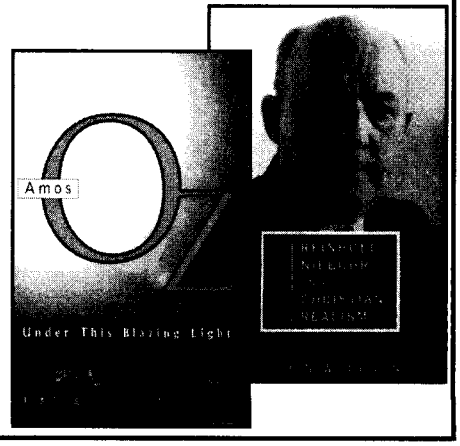

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Gordon, in particular, with her willingness at all times to teach and preach, to be the patient, devoted reader and adviser, proves herself worthy, indeed, of the warm gratitude friends such as Flannery O'Connor and Walker Percy constantly offered her—directly, or when speaking of her to others. □

A PREDATOR OF EXPERIENCE

IN PHARAOH'S ARMY
Memories of the Lost War
Tobias Wolff
Alfred A. Knopf, $23, 221 pp.

Michael O. Garvey

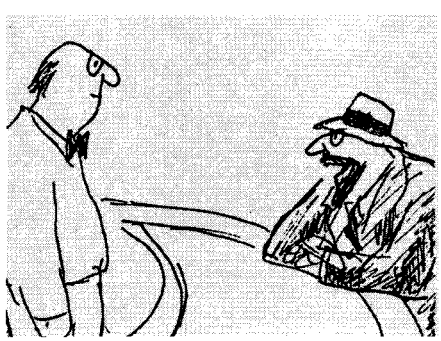
The AP photographer Horst Faas, who took many pictures of the war in Vietnam, replied memorably when an interviewer once suggested that his attraction to the subject of combat might be more than strictly professional: "Vot I like eez boom boom. Oh yes," he said.

Faas and other boom-boom aficionados would be disappointed by Tobias Wolff's essays on arms and men. Some readers of *In Pharaoh's Army* might suspect that Tobias Wolff himself is bemused by the unconventional nature of his memoir and even slightly apologetic that he can't manage to sound a little more like Michael Herr, Philip Caputo, Tim O'Brien, and other shaken veterans of the disaster in Southeast Asia. His problem—it seems to me at least—is that he's a far better writer than anyone else who has yet tried to describe what happened in Vietnam.

In his earlier book, *This Boy's Life*, Wolff gave an account of his own adolescence which perfectly balanced pity for his vulnerable teen-age self and ironical examination of that self's outrageous posturing. This is an exercise that Catholic school children were once taught to call an examination of conscience, and it's at least arguable that if we could all remember our favorite sins as precisely and our embattled selves as kindly as Wolff does, we might see a revival of the sacrament of reconciliation. In his memories of the Vietnam War, something just as crucial and funny and mysterious as that exercise is going on.

About what principally attracted him to the misadventure, Wolff is characteristically blunt and self-deprecating. A bright kid who wanted to be a writer, he admired such writers as Norman Mailer, Eric Maria Remarque, and Ernest Hemingway, and he believed that he needed experiences like theirs to write about: "I turned into a predator, and one of the things I became predatory about was experience....Experience was the clapper in the bell, the money in the bank, and of all the experiences the most bankable was military service."

While there is nothing in subsequent pages to suggest that this adolescent insight is untrue, there is ample and heartbreaking proof that, like most adolescent insights, it is tragically incomplete. After his enlistment and a fantastically incoherent (at least to those of us without military experience) series of training assignments, Wolff found himself just squeaking by in Officer Candidate School on the strength of his talent for writing satire. The school's graduation night traditionally featured a comedy revue for which the post commandant apparently had high expectations. Even Wolff's most disapproving superiors could ill afford a flop, so, he admits, "they kept me on to produce a farce. That was how I became an officer in the United States Army."



"The unusual."

Assigned as an advisor to an ARVN battalion, Wolff took up residence in My Tho, a Mekong Delta town about which some of the book's most luminous and absorbing passages are written. It was in My Tho, for instance, that the twenty-year-old Wolff

> took pleasure in being one of a very few white men among these dark folk, big among the small, rich among the poor. My special position did not make me feel arrogant, not at first. It made me feel benevolent, generous, protective as if I were surrounded by children, as I often was—crowds of them, shy but curious, taking turns stroking my hairy arms, and, as a special treat, my mustache. In My Tho I had a sense of myself as father, even as lord, the very sensation that, even more than all their holdings here, must have made the thought of losing this place unbearable to the French.

That frail sensation would be tested, obviously, by what has since become familiar history, and shattered beyond recognition during the Tet offensive, of which Wolff's laconic eight-page account is the most honest and useful description I've yet read. "As a military project," he concludes,

> Tet failed; as a lesson it succeeded. The VC came into My Tho and all the other towns knowing what would happen. They knew that once they were among the people, we would abandon our pretense of distinguishing between them. We would kill them all to get at one. In this way they taught the people that we did not love them and would not protect them; that for all our talk of partnership and brotherhood we disliked and mistrusted them, and that we would kill every last one of them to save our own skins. To believe otherwise was self-deception. They taught that lesson to the people, and also to us. At least they taught it to me.

That essay on Tet, "The Lesson," is as close as *In Pharaoh's Army* ever comes to

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a grand, historical assessment of the war, and even here, Wolff refuses to depart from the gritty surface of the particular. Elsewhere, his description of the personnel of a U.S. base near My Tho eloquently magnifies the local desolation:

> In their anger at being in this place and their refusal to come to terms with it they had created a profound, intractable bog. Something was wrong with the latrine system; the place always stank. They hadn't even bothered to plant any grass. At Dong Tam I saw something that wasn't allowed for in the national myth—our capacity for collective despair. People here seemed in the grip of an unshakable petulance. It was in the slump of their shoulders and the plodding way they moved. A sourness had settled over the base, spoiling and coarsening the men. The resolute imperial will was all played out here at the empire's fringe, lost in rancor and mud. Here were pharaoh's chariots engulfed; his horsemen confused; and all his magnificence dismayed.

But war is often beautiful, too. When the morning fog lifted over Fredricksburg, Virginia, and General Robert E. Lee saw the sunlight flashing on the bayonets of the Union soldiers he was preparing to kill, he famously remarked that it is well God made war so terrible lest we might grow too fond of it. Wolff is too good at his craft to neglect the glints of human splendor which flash on the surface of lethal steel. In an astonishing essay entitled "Duty," he presents Sergeant Fisher, a frightened and inarticulate young man who resists the temptation to desert a doomed position. The sole American in a village likely to be overrun at any minute by the Viet Cong, Fisher is last glimpsed by Wolff from the window of a departing helicopter. "He didn't see me. He was busy making assurances, giving hope with his calm voice and the fact of his abiding presence. Duty had swallowed him whole, loneliness, fear, and all. His path was absolutely clear. I almost envied him."

Among the reasons *In Pharaoh's Army* is such a fine war story is Tobias Wolff's almost magical capacity for making such an emotion imaginable. □

A MOST IMPROBABLE BEAUTY

FELICIA'S JOURNEY
William Trevor
Viking, $21.95, 213 pp.

Sara Maitland

William Trevor is an eminent British writer, claimed—very properly—by the British literary establishment; winner of many of the most prestigious British literary awards. But importantly, Trevor is not British, but Irish—he was born in County Cork in 1928, brought up in provincial Ireland, and educated at Trinity College, Dublin. He is a member of the Irish Academy of Letters. He is a very Irish writer.

I simplify—there are, of course, many kinds of Irish writers. Ireland has produced some of the finest English prose writings and it would be ridiculous to try and claim that they all shared some profound Celtic singleness of style or intention. Nonetheless there is a strain in contemporary British writing which can fairly be called "Irish" and Trevor belongs in that tradition. It is above all a strain of an intense, lyrical emotion—a determination to make the reader *feel*; be moved by mundanity, by careful concentration on the little details of daily life.

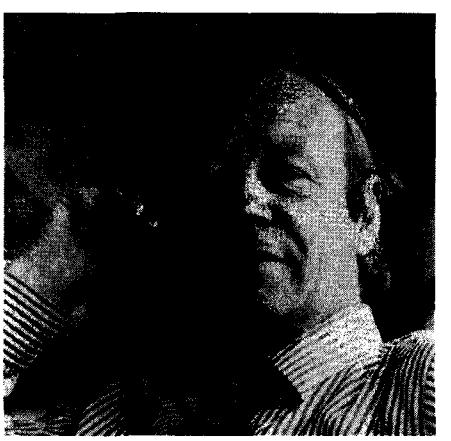
Trevor is the most wonderful writer: the experience of actually being in the act of reading *Felicia's Journey* is extraordinary. "Page-turning" usually applies to plot but that is not what kept me utterly inside this novel—it was something about having to pay attention. *Felicia's Journey* is both demanding and exhilarating, frequently almost unbearable; sometimes even, the more intellectual part of this reader at least wanted to resist so blatant an attempt to have her heart wrung. It is more like the experience of reading poetry or the works of certain spiritual writers—a profound emotional engagement, coupled by a driving sense that something extremely important is going on.

Is that not enough? In the light of such a literary experience it may be unreasonable to mention that after you have staggered out from under this enchantment you may find yourself wondering whether it was all worth it.

Felicia's Journey is a novel about innocence. Felicia is, in the old-fashioned sense of the word, "simple." Pregnant, motherless, she leaves her small, dead-end Irish town in search of the father of her child who she faithfully believes loves her and has failed to learn of her plight only through the evil machinations of his mother. She has no address and rather inadequate clues. Her doomed journey takes her through the once industrial and now decayed heartland of northern England, where pathetic people live broken lives.

Trevor has the ability to present these lives without any tone of superiority—he neither minimizes nor sentimentalizes the individual brokenness, the structural despair and the darkness that both breed. But even here, he argues with passion, even at the extremes of human experience there is sweetness, there is kindness, generosity, and—by implication at least—grace.

Felicia comes from a background of harsh but clear values; formed and shaped



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by the heroic violence of Ireland. Her father's pride in his bedridden grandmother—the wife of a dead activist of the Easter Rising—strips Felicia of the ease of normal youth. Her father half-hopes her unemployment and consequent narrowness of aspiration will continue so that the old lady can be cared for properly. He hates his daughter's lover, not so much because of his morality but because of a rumor, neither denied nor proven by the story, that the man has joined the British army. Felicia's consciousness is filled with a mixture of a longing for love and life—but a life within the structures of this society—and a strange assortment of Catholic religious images.

She is thus totally ill-equipped to confront or even manage the destabilized, fragmented social reality in which she finds herself in England. The contrast here is finely managed: neither the rigidity of her Irish hometown community nor the complete loss of community, the sense that people can and do disappear forever in the wastelands, are offered to the reader as good, merely as different, contrasting sorrows. Nonetheless, everyone Felicia encounters has an agenda of manipulation and madness, while she is "pure" in her quest and in her heart.

Inevitably she enters hell, not a hell of her own making, but a hell provoked by her own simplicity (or, one might think, though Trevor would not say so, her stupidity). It is impossible to describe the harrowing—in all senses—of this hell without giving away the plot; and as Trevor almost manages not to do so himself (the unfolding is elliptical and mysterious and known only to the insane and the deluded), it would be mean of me to do so. But at the heart of the novel is a genuine darkness, a man so truly dreadful that one is moved weirdly to compassion for him. Trevor, with a moral integrity that is quite extraordinary, manages to explain this terror without ever "explaining it away" or minimizing or excusing. It is still ghastly, yet it is not beyond compassion, beyond our recognition of the cruelty of chance, the arbitrary nature of evil.

By the end of the novel "a terrible beauty is born." Felicia has become a street person, and has found there a calm, an almost joyful serenity and acceptance of herself

"That's for leading a life of quiet desperation!"

and of her life. Felicia's fate, or redemption, if it is a redemption, if she needed redeeming, is so profoundly unacceptable that it is deeply disturbing, moving, touching. Disturbed, moved, touched, I still wanted to protest: to protest at Trevor's apparent acceptance that this is good enough—good enough for Felicia, good enough for any young innocent person. By claiming, through the mystery-weighted intensity of the prose, that there is a deep spiritual truth here, Trevor forces himself into a corner—a solution that might just be good enough for the individual he has described, has become a universal proclamation. Political busy-bodies like me have to protest at the magical loveliness of the end. I cannot believe it. I cannot believe that the "lost" in this sense—those lost without consent, through evil and the indifference of society—are or should be contented; or that we, in the comfort of our literary sensibilities, should be allowed to find this place of desolation so beautiful.

Felicia is as a lamb to the slaughter. This may be true, it may be how the lives of too many innocent and not very bright women are, but it should not be held up as beautiful and lovely.

Trevor makes it beautiful. As reader I cannot but admire this. As moralist I must protest. Which frame of reference should I bring to such a novel? To this novel, which forces the question more powerfully than anything I have read in a long time? □

WHAT A CHARACTER!

GOD
A Biography
Jack Miles
Alfred A. Knopf, $27.50, 424 pp.

Luke Timothy Johnson

Should we think of the Bible as a kind of novel, with God as the story's protagonist? And if we read the Bible in this way, will it deepen our understanding of God or of ourselves, or of the "book" we regard as sacred Scripture? Jack Miles attempts such a character study of the "Lord God" as that figure is developed within the Hebrew Bible. (An excerpt from *God: A Biography* was featured in *Commonweal*'s March 10 issue.)

Borrowing the distinction made by William Kerrigan about readers of Shakespeare, Miles associates himself with those "critics" who think about the character of Hamlet, rather than with those "scholars" who are concerned only about the play *Hamlet*. Although the features of the character can be derived only from the text, it is only when we can imagine that character as "real" and "alive" outside the text that the character becomes compelling and places demands on our imagination. Miles moves from the hints provided by the biblical text concerning what "Lord God" thought, spoke, and did, to reflections on who this character might be.

Since Miles traces the development of God's character through the sequence of biblical books, the ordering of the texts is obviously important. Should God's character be drawn from the sequence of the Christian Old Testament (based on the

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Septuagint), which follows the narrative accounts with wisdom writings and concludes with the prophets? Or should it be constructed from the order of the Hebrew canon (the *Tanakh*), in which God first acts, then speaks, but then falls silent? Miles chooses to follow the *Tanakh*.

He seeks to identify the character traits of God in this sequence of texts, considering God in turn as creator, destroyer, friend of the family, liberator, lawgiver, liege, conqueror, father, arbiter, executioner, holy one, wife, counselor, guarantor, fiend, sleeper, bystander, recluse, puzzle, absence, ancient of days, scroll. He pauses frequently for *excursi* that pose such reflective questions as "Does God Love?" or "Does God Fail?" or (perhaps most provocatively), "Does God Lose Interest?"

Here's the story of "Lord God" in brief: God is a being without any history but with a pronounced case of multiple personality disorder. He wants a history, so invents humans "in his image." God can't decide what exactly to do with these beings, but gives them the power to reproduce, then tries to find himself in their story, changing as they change, gathering new character traits through their experience. First he fights them jealously for the power over life, then becomes a warrior who develops a taste for blood, and finally, after showing his power once too often to the canny and adamant Job, falls silent, allowing himself to be utterly incorporated into the life of the people, and ultimately, in their book about him. In short, God both finds and loses himself in his human creature. Miles concludes by suggesting that the reason why humans in the "Western Tradition" have such a complex sense of self is that they learned it from the odd combination of unity and multiplicity in their biblical God.

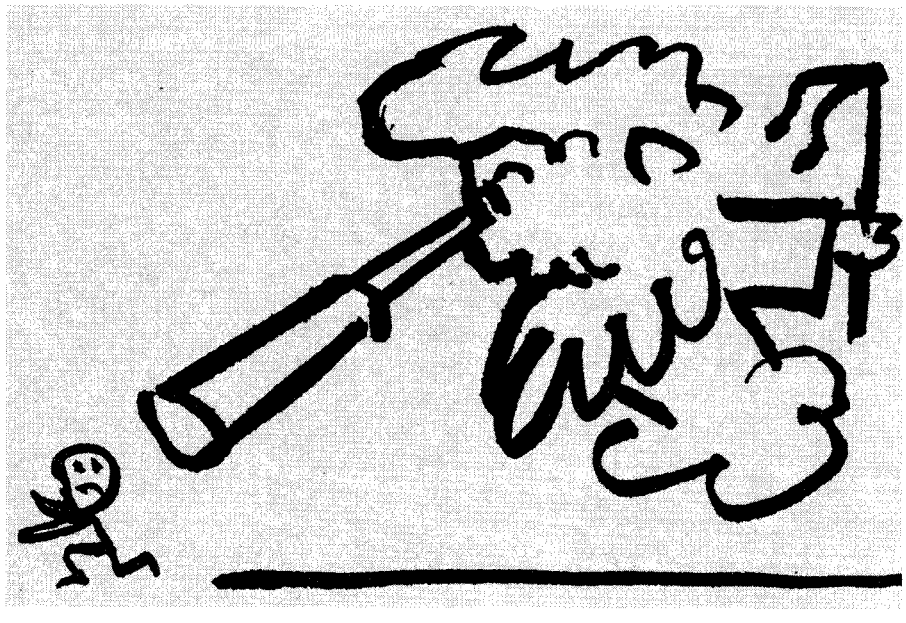
Although the book adopts a deliberate sort of naiveté in its tracing of God's character (taking only what the text will give, being surprised even when the text is not), it is not in the least unlearned. The author's credentials as a student of the biblical world in its Near Eastern environment are abundantly displayed, and his choice of contemporary conversation partners matches in sophistication his often stunning prose. There is much that is inventive here, much that is deeply interesting.

For all that, the book is, in my judgment, also deeply flawed. The project is obviously limited by its self-restriction to the order of books in the *Tanakh*. Neither for Judaism nor Christianity has the character of God been derived solely from those writings. By failing to trace the character of God as it is developed in the Christian writings of the New Testament, or continues to function as a character in Jewish intertestamental, rabbinic, and mystical literature, Miles ends up dealing with a literary abstraction.

The character of God, I would argue, has probably never been constructed from the kind of sequential reading of the canonical books here undertaken by Miles. It has been constructed in much more complex fashion in a free-ranging conversation with these texts and many others in the life and prayer and study of these rich and living religious traditions. For that reason, Miles's choice to consider the psalms (to take one example) only in one place in the sequence betrays their very essence as prayer, which resists such linear ideas of development. The psalms are not a moment in the development of a character but contain within themselves all the moments of past (and, for Christians) future developments of God's character. Miles's profile is therefore interesting but not compelling, for it is, in a very real sense, beside the point for most readers of these texts or worshipers of this God.

There are other problems in execution, even when the value of Miles's project is accepted. It seems to me to be a lapse in method to invoke, as he does, extrabiblical mythology and lore from the Ancient Near East, and use it in constructing God's character. If we want to work just with what the Bible gives us, then we should stick to that. If Miles wants to work in some cultural intertextuality, then he should give up the "construction of character from the unfolding of narrative" naiveté. But the artificiality of this pose is also shown by Miles's insistence on arguing repeatedly from silence: "if the Bible has not yet told us this or that about God, then God must not yet have been this or that." I'm not quite sure what to call this fallacy, but I am fairly sure that it is not even good literary criticism to suppose that characters acquire traits only as the text announces them.

Finally, Miles's own preoccupations are perhaps read into the text more than he realizes. I was struck by how much attention was paid to what might be called the emotive side of God's character, and how little to his mental side. The most obvious example is the portrayal of God as Lawgiver. Miles acknowledges the transtemporal greatness of the Ten Commandments. But he barely pauses over the specifically *characterological* implications of the heart of Torah. He rushes on to the bloodthirstiness of God, shown in the various punishments to be



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administered. He does not celebrate—as the entire rabbinic tradition has celebrated—what the very *concept* of covenant and law says about the character of God. I can only conclude that Miles considers that the confused passions of persons are more constitutive of their character than the products of their minds. Which makes me not look forward to any book he might write on the Trinity. □

DEEP ENDO

DEEP RIVER
Shusaku Endo
New Directions, $19.95, 224 pp.

THE FINAL MARTYRS
Shusaku Endo
New Directions, $21.95, 199 pp.

Patricia O'Connell

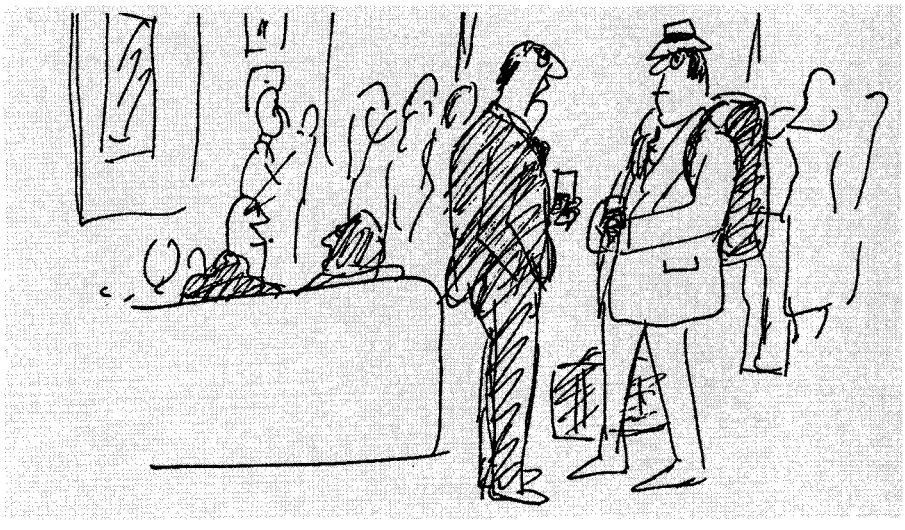
In two newly translated volumes, a novel and a story collection, Japanese Catholic Shusaku Endo reiterates and sometimes expands upon his major theme—the frustration of trying to fuse Western Christianity and Eastern culture.

The novel *Deep River* may take its title from the Negro spiritual that provides its epigraph, but the setting here is not the American South—it is India, the destination of a Japanese tourist group, and the river is the Ganges, "so deep," in the words of the sometimes cynical character Mitsuko, "I feel as though it's not just for the Hindus but for everyone." This shift of locale from Japan, which provides the backdrop for most of Endo's fiction, offers the author an opportunity to move beyond his typical exposition of the East-West dichotomy, to explore how yet another culture and religion can rattle expectations and provide new self-revelations for his characters.

Among the tourists are Isobe, a non-demonstrative office worker who's recently lost his long-neglected wife, Keiko, to cancer; and, on the trip by chance, Mitsuko, a divorced volunteer at the hospital where Keiko died. Mitsuko's leisure-time do-goodism with patients seems at odds with her coldness and lack of faith, but the complexity of her character and the terrible loneliness with which she lives are convincingly revealed as the novel progresses. Also making the trip are Numada, a writer of animal stories who's often mistakenly ghettoized in the book world as a children's author, and Kiguchi, a former soldier obsessed with his experiences on the Highway of Death in Burma during World War II. What would otherwise be a central-casting stereotype—the photo-snapping tourist from hell—is here transformed into a pivotal role in the person of Sanjo, an ambitious, obnoxious newlywed; even his wife is just another stepping stone in his well-orchestrated and utterly compassionless life-plan. Another interesting spin in the character mix is Enami, the guide from Cosmos Tour Company, who secretly despises the travelers he leads through this foreign land.

Most intriguing of all, however, is Otsu—not a member of the tour group but Mitsuko's former schoolmate who is now a Catholic priest living in an ashram. An outsider while a college student because of his religious fervor, Otsu ironically becomes another kind of outsider while studying for the priesthood because, for example, he cannot shed his Eastern belief in the commingling of good and evil; this notion is dangerously "Jansenistic or Manichaeistic," he is told by more traditional Catholic teachers. He fulfills his priestly vocation in carrying the bodies of dead Hindu pilgrims, outcasts, to funeral pyres near the river Ganges for cremation. When asked how he reconciles the Hindu belief in reincarnation with Christianity, he explains, "Every one of [the disciples] had stayed alive by abandoning [Jesus] and running away. He continued to love them even though they had betrayed him. As a result, he was etched into each of their guilty hearts. He died, but he was restored to life in their hearts."

The letters between characters in this novel reinforce Endo's reputation as a marvelous epistolary writer; he would have given Paul et al. some stiff competition had he lived in New Testament times. And he once again proves himself the master of the quirky, unforgettable detail: when Isobe learns his wife has terminal cancer, he simultaneously hears outside the hospital window "the voice of a street vendor peddling roasted sweet potatoes—*Yaki imo-o-o*." Any reader acquainted with Endo's work knows of its highly autobiographical nature. This attention to sounds in his latest writing reminds us that Endo spent a good deal of time in his life listening to painful silences



"Why don't you get yourself a decent *travel agent?"*

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(or arguments) before his parents' divorce, to the unfamiliar Mass that his mother chose as his form of worship when he was a schoolboy in a Buddhist country, to the medical professionals who have operated on and muttered ominously over his lungs for too much of his life, to the French spoken during his adult years as a student in Lyon, where he willfully exposed himself to a culture imbued not only with that prickly Christianity but also a fierce national pride, and where he must have felt even more an outsider than as a Catholic in Japan.

Familiar themes also resonate throughout his second story collection. In the title story of *The Final Martyrs*, Endo again reveals his fascination with apostasy. In "Shadows," an epistolary piece, we see a grown man writing to a priest, now separated from the church, who loomed large in the man's childhood after his parents had split up and his mother had arranged for herself and her son to convert to Catholicism (which his father refers to as "one of those 'Amen' churches"). Two stories here, "A Fifty-year-old Man" and "A Sixty-year-old Man," are march-of-time semisequels to "A Forty-year-old Man," which appeared in Endo's first story collection, *Stained Glass Elegies* (1987); the oldest protagonist in these stories is in fact the author of *The Life of Jesus* (1979), nonfiction that Endo himself wrote. "Japanese in Warsaw," which includes a tourist-loathing guide (this time Shimzu of the Orbis Travel Bureau), has certain parallels with *Deep River* and also with "Fudano-Tsuji" in *Stained Glass Elegies*. Both involve the Polish saint, Maximilian Kolbe, who at one point served in Nagasaki as a missionary and later sacrificed his life at Auschwitz. In "The Last Supper" we see Kiguchi, somewhat transformed from his role in Endo's latest novel, but still entangled in a tale of the Burmese Highway of Death. Indeed, the similarities between these stories and Endo's other works are too numerous to mention. Whether one considers the repetition among the stories, novels, drama, sketches, and memoir pieces intriguing or exasperating is up to the individual reader.

The historical novel *Silence* (1980), concerning the apostate Jesuit missionary Christovao Ferreira and his former seminary student Sebastian Rodrigues in seventeenth-century Japan (and reportedly being filmed by director Martin Scorsese), remains Endo's masterpiece, but these two new works, beautifully translated by Van C. Gessel, are welcome additions to the author's *oeuvre* in English. Let's hope that New Directions continues to publish the award-winning Endo in this country and that such publications spur more lengthy analysis of this writer's life and work. □

BEING EVELYN

EVELYN WAUGH
A Biography
Selina Hastings
Houghton Mifflin, $40, 724 pp.

Robert Murray Davis

The general outline and many of the details of the life of Evelyn Waugh are known well enough for him to assume his place in the pantheon, or rogues' gallery, of English eccentrics. It would seem that Martin Stannard's two-volume biography, totaling over a thousand pages, should have satisfied the most voracious appetite. When Selina Hastings's biography was announced, even the most devoted Waugh scholars wondered if her book was really necessary.

As if aware of these sentiments, Hastings announces at the beginning of the book her intention "to give as close an impression as possible of what it was like to know Evelyn Waugh, even something of what it was like to be Evelyn Waugh." This, coupled with the strongly implied contrast between her book and Stannard's "full-scale critical biography," sounds ominously like the elegant and superficial kind of work done for hire by a journalist.

Fortunately, Hastings has written an entirely different kind of book. She has interviewed a great many people, has had access to a large body of unpublished material, much of it previously inaccessible, and has consulted much of the growing body of material published about Waugh.

From these various sources she has constructed a clear and admirably concise picture of his human and physical milieu. She is particularly good on places: the house where he grew up; Lansing College, his public school; his rooms at Oxford; the two houses he owned. In these matters she is obviously better informed than Stannard. For example, in his sole reference to Pixton Park, where Waugh courted his future wife, Laura Herbert, he calls it an "elegant country house." Hastings describes

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it as "a handsome Georgian house, spacious and comfortable, solidly built rather than architecturally distinguished. The high-ceilinged rooms are well proportioned, the furniture good, but the Herberts were unaware of appearances and indifferent to physical comfort" and lived in "a homely shabbiness."

Hastings also presents the sharpest portraits known to me of people important in Waugh, not only literal, with photographs not previously published, but, more important, verbal. These include his parents; his first wife; John Heygate, for whom she left Waugh; Olivia Plunket Greene, his first heterosexual romance; and even Ernest Oldmeadow, the Catholic editor who attacked *Black Mischief*. Detail after detail adds to our sense of the world in which Waugh lived: how much his first wife paid for her flat, the name of his second wife's dog, and his method of writing ("in longhand with a Relief nib on sheets of lined foolscap paper"), even the names of his neighbors at Oxford across New College Lane, Best and Chetwynd, who, with the addition of terminal e's, were combined for the name of the heroine in *Decline and Fall*.

Although Hastings drew upon a much larger body of material than had Stannard, her book is over 30 percent shorter. Since she is not an academic, she is more inclined to summarize than to quote. (To be sure, less quotation, in the case of Waugh, does not necessarily make a book more readable.) Instead, she picks out scattered quotations and places them, gracefully, in a pattern. And she is not, like Stannard, developing or creating a case against Waugh, taking personal and lengthy offense at almost everything he thought or did or could

have done, with the slenderest evidence, have imputed to him. Perhaps the difference is that Hastings, from an upper-class background, understands perfectly why someone from Waugh's class would want to associate with hers. Or perhaps she doesn't take things personally. Or, as is often the case, she draws upon more than one source in describing events and is able to present a balanced account. At any rate, she imputes motives more complex and often far more creditable to Waugh than Stannard was willing to do.

Still, this is neither a whitewash nor a hagiography. Hastings is quite aware of Waugh's childish side, of his desire for attention and affection, and of his tendency to bully people, sometimes in the hope that they would stand up to him. But she is also very clear about the attractive side of Waugh, socially and sexually, and, though there are indications that she is not Catholic, the sincerity and depth of his faith. She may overestimate the influence of Ronald Knox, who, "with his elitist and anachronistic view of the church, did Evelyn a great deal of harm," especially in dealing with changes occasioned by Vatican II. Waugh did read books by other contemporary priests, including those by Martin D'Arcy, S.J., who received him into the church.

The book is weakest on Waugh's undeniable strength: his writing. Hastings offers competent summaries of his novels and other works, but she is no literary critic. Her one original idea is that "as a novelist he was always most engaged, always at his most true, subtle and profound when depicting members of his own society," thus dismissing large parts of *Black Mischief* and *Scoop* and the Brazilian section of *A Handful of Dust*, the last on the grounds that the alternative, serial ending is "artistically much more complementary."

These judgments are at least arguable, but Hastings's lack of attention to Waugh's creative work is revealed by a number of factual errors. The Prince of Wales does not make "homosexual advances to the pope" in Waugh's film, *The Scarlet Woman*; the central character attempts suicide by poison, not drowning, in "The Balance"; the character of Archon in *Black Mischief* is not based on Lej Yasu; Tony Last's bedroom at Hetton is Morgan le Fay, not Galahad (reserved for the least welcome guests); only Lord Marchmain, of the Flyte family in *Brideshead Revisited*, can be described as a recent convert.

Nevertheless, Hastings has written a very readable and on the whole quite believable account of what it was like to know Waugh, if not to be him. She has also written a life of Nancy Mitford, whose love of gossip and sense of mis-

REVIEWERS

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PATRICIA A. O'CONNELL*'s reviews have appeared in various periodicals, including the* New York Times Book Review.

ROBERT MURRAY DAVIS *has edited* A Handful of Dust *for the Penguin Twentieth Century Classics series. His* A Lower-Middle-Class Education, *about a Catholic college in the 1950s, will be published next year by the University of Oklahoma Press.*

ABIGAIL McCARTHY, *author and lay historian, is a long-time* Commonweal *columnist.*

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chief matched Waugh's and who could certainly stand up to him. Mitford reported of one visit that "Most of the time he was sweet, twice he was bloody, and all the time funny. About what one can expect." This is roughly the proportion that Hastings preserves, so that, if her readers do not see the books or the writer more clearly, they do have a more accurate view of the man. □

IN BRIEF

AT PEACE WITH ALL THEIR NEIGHBORS: CATHOLICS AND CATHOLICISM IN THE NATIONAL CAPITAL 1787–1860, by *William W. Warner, Georgetown University Press, $29.95, 320 pp.*

According to the old *Catholic Dictionary* edited by Donald Attwater, a parish is a defined territorial district with a church and congregation under the charge of a priest "who has the cure of souls therein." Historically in cities in the United States the bond between people and parish has been so strong that Catholic families have drawn their identities from it: They are "from Blessed Sacrament," "from Saint Gabriel's," or "from Holy Redeemer."

For most American Catholics, the parish is church. It is where they are baptized, first receive the sacraments, are married, and from which they are buried. They are formed in doctrine and church lore there; acquire habits of prayer and piety there; and form their images of church authority from the succession of parish pastors. Their Catholicism is local.

William Warner began his book as a simple parish history—that of Holy Trinity parish, the oldest in the District of Columbia. As he began his research he discovered a wealth of records. Not only were the baptismal and marriage registers of Holy Trinity virtually complete from 1795 onwards but there were diaries, correspondence, the archives of the Maryland Jesuits, Georgetown University, and the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

In the abundance of records he discovered a subsidiary theme—a theme that went far beyond that of a local parish history. He found a parish whose people were not only important in founding the capital city of Washington but set the dominant tone for Catholic-Protestant relations and Catholic-state relations in the maturing American nation so late a collection of colonies.

For the most part the founders of Holy Trinity were Maryland Catholics—fifth- and sixth-generation Americans, affluent and well-established in their communities. Their experience in Maryland had formed their traditions—these included the advocacy of the separation of church and state, a sense of civic duty, and a determination "to live at peace with all their neighbors," in the phrase of Marylander John Carroll, America's first Catholic bishop.

Most Americans think of Maryland as a Catholic colony established by Lord Baltimore where acts of religious liberty were passed in 1639 and 1649. They are not as apt to know, however, that that era of toleration passed quickly. The Baltimores' proprietary rule was overthrown after England's "Glorious Revolution" in 1689. By 1763 Maryland's Assembly passed an act introducing a seventy-two-year period of anti-Catholic penal laws that forbade Catholics communal worship, religious education, eligibility for public office, and other human rights.

Coping with these circumstances, Warner says, developed the attributes cited above that had a lasting effect on the development of the church in America. As a result, as Warner concludes, the citizens of Washington withstood the tide of bigotry against the Catholic church that washed across the nation in the two decades before the Civil War. "The roots of the Maryland tradition were too deep and strong to tolerate a political movement that attempted to undermine the tradition's basic precepts."

Warner has given us not only a richly detailed history of a parish (accompanied incidentally by the history of Georgetown University to which Holy Trinity was so closely tied) but a historical tool essential to understanding the place and temper of American Catholics in the story of the universal church.

ABIGAIL McCARTHY

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Letters, prayers & theologies

Lawrence S. Cunningham

Shortly after the conclusion of Vatican I, the German theologian Josef Kleutgen took up again an analysis of the act of faith which he called "the cross of theologians." Father Dulles, in a highly readable and very informative work, tells us in some detail why a theological consideration of faith is such a thorny and vexatious issue. He also informs us that as a subject it is one that has not been a centerpiece of recent theological writing despite the mountains of literature produced on the topic earlier in this century.

A moment's reflection on the question of what it means, in the Christian tradition, to say "I believe" sets out the problem. Does one believe in the sense of trusting or is it a matter of assent? Does one "reason" to belief or does belief come from an impulse of grace? If the latter, is that impulse irresistible? Can one really fall away from faith? Is faith certain? Obscure? All of these and cognate issues have been part and parcel of the Christian theological tradition from the apostolic period. They were issues, of course, which were neuralgic in the period of the Reformation.

The Assurance of Things Hoped for: A Theology of Christian Faith, *by Avery Dulles, S.J., Oxford University Press, $35, 299 pp.*

It is the precise merit of Dulles's book that he gives us, in the first part of this work, a systematic tour of the theological tradition. Given his earlier work on apologetics and revelation one is not surprised that this economical survey shows a mastery of a vast literature expressed in a fair and readable style.

The second part of the work (roughly the final eight chapters) then sets out, synthetically, the main parameters of a theology of faith: "Models" of faith; the nature and object of faith; the relationship of reason to faith (that is, its ground); the character of faith; etc. In the penultimate chapters he has some wise words on two much-discussed issues: the relationship of faith to human cognitive development (with a focus on the well-known work of James Fowler) and the salvific nature of faith *vis-à-vis* the situation of "unbelievers." The book ends with thirty-six short summary "theses" that seek to provide as much a synthesis as is possible on the topic of Christian faith.

This work is, to put it bluntly, "old-fashioned" theology but not (at least in my vocabulary) in any pejorative sense of the term. One can detect the old divisions of analysis and reflection with concluding theses. In that sense, Dulles breathes new life into the scholastic mode of proceeding (and, in that sense alone, it is *fashioned* out of an *old* order of proceeding). The singular merit of such a method, used by a master like our author, is organization, clarity, and a sure sense of what the issues are and where the author is going. Dulles is fair to all points of view, gingerly critical where he needs to be, and always faithful to the great theological tradition.

It is not an adventurous book but, as I said to my graduate students when I read a small portion of it in class, if one wanted to get a sense of the sweep of the tradition using one topic as the *leitmotif* (in this case, faith), I could hardly think of a better book. We are once again profoundly in the debt of one of the truly distinguished Catholic theologians of our time.

In the late 1960s Karl Rahner wrote an influential monograph on the Trinity arguing that it was a doctrine that had been neglected to such a degree that most Christians lived as almost pure monotheists. He further stipulated that an undue focus on the inner life of the Trinity (the "immanent" Trinity) has

LAWRENCE S. CUNNINGHAM *teaches theology, and chairs the department, at the University of Notre Dame.*

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been so speculative that the theological implications of faith seem abstract. However, the rule of faith and the liturgy have always had a focus on the Trinity: We profess a creed that is constructed from Trinitarian truths and we pray in "the name of the Father through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit."

Since Rahner wrote there has been a veritable explosion of studies on the Trinity with a special focus on the "economic" Trinity, that is, the Trinity as experienced

The Triune God: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Study, *by Thomas Marsh, Twenty-Third Publications, $14.95, 201 pp.*

in salvation history, as well as a new and intense interest in the work of the Holy Spirit in life and worship. We have major studies from scholars such as Yves Congar, Jürgen Moltmann, William Hill, Catherine LaCugna, Elizabeth Johnson, and the late Edward Kilmartin. More are undoubtedly in press.

Thomas Marsh's tidy survey of Trinitarian theology is, in effect, a kind of summary of recent research. Marsh, an Irish theologian who teaches at Maynooth, traces Trinitarian doctrine from its biblical underpinnings through the history of the tradition and on to the current discussions of Trinitarian theology as refracted through liberation and feminist thought. It is a compressed work (in the medieval period we get a full discussion of Aquinas but only a sidelong glance at Bonaventure and nothing from the Reformers), but one that is a reliable survey of the long efforts of theologians over the millennia to clarify one of the central mysteries of Christian belief.

I did think it unfortunate that Marsh consciously omitted a consideration of the Eastern Christian tradition since that tradition is so fecund (for example, in its discussion of "Divine Energies") and, further, so important for understanding the divisions (for example, the issue of the *filioque* in the Creed) between East and West. Despite that lacuna, this is a book that could well serve as a first entry into the richness of Trinitarian theology. The book ends with some discussion questions keyed to each chapter, a rather brief bibliography for further reading, but, alas, no index.

First published in Italian, this extended conversation between the eighty-year-

I Am a Happy Theologian, *by Edward Schillebeeckx, Crossroad, $11.95., 103 pp.*

old Flemish theologian and the Italian interviewer Francesco Strazzari puts into personal perspective the massive contributions of Edward Schillebeeckx to contemporary theology. As such, it adds to that modest shelf of personal memoirs (like the late Karl Rahner's *Faith in a Wintery Season*) of those who were at the heart of the great renewal of theology which led up to the Second Vatican Council and beyond.

Schillebeeckx's life underscores, among other things, the critical importance of his encounter with the theological renewal emanating, in the 1940s and 1950s, from the French Dominican house of Le Saulchoir as well as its most famous exile, M.D. Chenu, who had been banished to the Sorbonne (!) in the early 1940s. Along with their French Jesuit contemporaries, the generation of Congar, de Lubac, Chenu, Daniélou, et al. hammered at a few basic but critical themes: the need to recover the biblical and patristic heritage of the church; the necessary dismantling of a rigid and sterile scholasticism which captured theology in an intellectual straitjacket; the courage to think through the fact of modernity with more serenity and less defensiveness; and a better historical understanding of what shaped the form of the church after Trent.

Schillebeeckx describes both his education and his subsequent career as a university professor at Nijmegen in Holland. Interleaved in this pilgrimage are moments now famous in recent Catholic history: the writing of the famous "Dutch" catechism; the role of the various *periti* at

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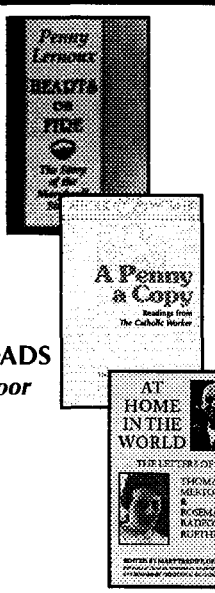

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the council; and his relationship with Rome.

When Schillebeeckx was first denounced to Rome by a Dominican colleague, Karl Rahner was appointed as his advocate. Schillebeeckx did not know that he had been denounced. Rahner told him of the process despite being instructed to keep the process *sub secreto*. When the denunciation became public, Rahner again denied to the Roman authorities that he was the source of the leak. Rahner's apologia for this behavior was twofold; Schillebeeckx had a right in justice to know of the process, and Rahner felt that a "mental qualification" was in order when queried about it later. The net result was that subsequent Roman practice was changed.

This slight book (padded out with a few of Schillebeeckx's sermons) is no substitute for his own writings, but as a window into the thinking of an eminent scholar, now in the twilight of his life, it makes a quick read that brings us closer to one of the major Catholic thinkers of our age.

Pennington's book is also a retrospective look at the council but at a far less personal level. As he himself admits, readers of his book are most likely to be "middle-aged or older." His hope is that his readers will go back to the conciliar documents and gain a fresh appreciation of what the council has done. His separate chapters gloss the major documents and cite largish chunks of them. His excerpts attempt a gender-free rewriting of the

Vatican II: We've Only Just Begun, *by M. Basil Pennington, Crossroad, $13.95, 167 pp.*

Abbott/Gallagher translation but a far better source for this kind of language can be found in Norman Tanner's *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (Georgetown University Press; reviewed in this column, October 12, 1990). What he has to say about the conciliar documents is usually at the level of appreciation and exhortation but provides little that has not been said many times before at greater length by other writers.

We are well over a generation away from the great events of Vatican II. As I noted above, the *periti* now pen their memoirs and soon most of them will be gone. The students I teach today were born a decade after the council finished, and the debates of those days have no more resonance for them than the documents of Trent. Vatican II is part of the continuing heritage of the tradition. The best we can say about books like Pennington's is that they reflect a great sense of faith in the Spirit's guidance of the church. As a theological meditation, however, this little book, written in the readable style one expects from this prolific monk-writer, spends too much time looking in the rear-view mirror.

I am very partial to anthologies of prayers, both because they are welcome invitations to browse and because they are an excellent source for theological meditation. Van de Weyer's collection (he is an Anglican priest at Little Gidding, a place made famous in Eliot's *Four Quartets*), drawn from the world's religions, is not organized into categories. In that sense it differs from George Appleton's *The*

The HarperCollins Book of Prayers, *compiled by Robert Van De Weyer, HarperCollins, $25, 414 pp.*

Oxford Book of Prayers and Tony Castle's *The New Book of Christian Prayers*. Van de Weyer settles for an alphabetical order (Adam of Saint Victor to Zoroaster), using, as his criterion of selection, an emphasis on prayers of devotion in which persons bring their own needs to God in personal words. At the end of the book there is a rather thorough topical index for those looking for prayers for specific times or themes.

I very much like the range of people represented in this volume, the crispness of presentation (each person gets a brief biographical introduction), and the handsome typography. This well-produced book would make an excellent gift purchase for a friend or might well serve as a vademecum for personal devotion.

The Woman's Prayer Companion is not designed for private devotional use. It adapts the basic liturgical structure of morning/evening prayer (lauds and vespers) with a precise focus on the experience of women. The book is divided into two parts: a prayer service for special events (adoption; time of distress; for living alone; etc.), and a sanctoral cycle (based on the calendar) geared to the Holy Women (both canonized and uncanonized). Each section follows a recognizable pattern: a series of antiphons for the psalms; a prose passage for reflection; a

The Woman's Prayer Companion, *by the Carmelites of Indianapolis, Indianapolis Carmel, $10, 205 pp.*

responsory; the traditional canticles for morning or evening prayer; and intercessions ending with a collect prayer. The prayers and the psalter (based on the NRSV) use inclusive language in a sensible and sensitive fashion.

One could envision this interesting book being used in a number of different ways: for ad hoc groups who want structured prayers; as models for further adaptation of the liturgical offices of morning or evening prayer to be used on special occasions; for religious communities or intentional groups who pray in common; or, as in my own case, as a resource for understanding the possibilities of different forms of doxological language.

The book is available by writing: Psalter/Carmelite Monastery/2500 Cold Springs Road/Indianapolis, IN 46222. Fans of May Sarton (I include myself) will remember the high praise she offers this community in her published journals. Judging from this present effort, these contemplative women have discovered the knack, as the Gospel says, of bringing forth "old things and new." They deserve our support.

Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) is one of the most extraordinary people in the history of the church. She was a contemplative, author, encyclopedist, composer of music, musician, and confidante of a range of people from popes on down.

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RELIGIOUS BOOKNOTES

We have been well served by excellent studies of her life and work (especially by Barbara Newman and Sabina Flanagan) and good editions of her works are now available in English translation. Unfortunately, the only collection of her letters was in a tendentiously execrable translation issued some years ago by the publishing house associated with Matthew Fox's Creation Spirituality movement.

Two scholars have now undertaken to give us careful translations of her letters; this first volume includes roughly fifty of her letters along with copies (where available) of the letters of respondents. This volume represents the first of what, one presumes and hopes, will be a complete English translation of the over four hundred letters available.

The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen (Volume 1), *translated and edited by Joseph L. Baird and Radd K. Ehrman, Oxford University Press, $39.95, 227 pp.*

Each letter has a very brief introduction, a few helpful explanatory notes, and, not infrequently, the original Latin text to help us to see how the translators worked on what is, at places, a convoluted and eccentric Latin style. The entire volume is prefaced by a very helpful essay on Hildegard's life and her significance. The order of the letters is curious in that it follows a pattern not uncommon in medieval times: the first letters are ranked according to the dignity of the person (Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, followed by popes, cardinals, etc.); the second part of the letters lists alphabetically the place of destination and includes letters from the lower clergy and religious.

Here is what I loved about these letters: Hildegard's tough-minded demand for reform in the church; her widely acknowledged authority as a spiritual counselor of the first rank; that even archbishops wrote her for copies of her sermons preached in their home dioceses urging reform and peace; that professional theologians (scholastic, which is to say, dialectical theology was now aborning) wrote her for advice about theological conundrums or to strengthen their faith in new formulations (for example, transubstantiation); her creative approach to biblical exegesis.

The letters also reveal a tough-minded fighter who stood her ground against prelates and, lest we think her an "advanced" thinker, a conservative (she did not like the new religious orders coming into existence in the wake of the Gregorian reform) and a bit of a snob (she admitted only aristocrats to her community, arguing that nobody hitches in tandem an ox and an ass to do plowing). One must also wonder at her theatricality: her community, on feast days, dressed in long white robes with golden crowns on heads of free flowing (unwimpled?) hair.

Finally, contemporary readers will find much to ponder in her original vocabulary (Hildegard loves the noun *viriditas*, literally "greenness," which for her is an attribute of the world and of graced-people). Readers will also love her concept of *symphonia* as an overarching concept to think of a cosmos alive with the Spirit of God.

I've carted this volume around for weeks in my bookbag, dipping into these letters with admiration and delight. □

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 2)

or special interest. And with referenda there is no way to fix responsibility for a bad decision.

The information superhighway makes more informed citizen-input possible. But interacting by computer and television is no substitute for a face-to-face deliberative process. A small number of communication elites will force or make decisions that mirror their interests and needs. Again, no one is held accountable if a decision goes sour.

Hearing from "the people" is an important part of representative democracy. As the role of political parties erodes, we must find other ways to engage in civic debates that will encourage broad consensus. But we should preserve the deliberative legislative process and the responsibility for decisions which elected representatives bear.

ROBERT A. BEEZAT

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Chant in the bistros?

Trappist, Ky.

To the Editors: Congratulations on the excellent article "Chant around the Clock" by Ralph Thibodeau [March 24]. I am told Gregorian Chant is now being played to patients in mental hospitals as well as to patrons of night clubs, the latter as a diversion. If that's true, there could be an ever greater demand for Chant recordings to follow the enormous success of the initial release by the Spanish Benedictines of Santo Domingo de Silos.

It may be of interest to your readers that Sony Classical (which controls the rights of Columbia Records) has recently released a compact disc from an early 1960 recording that the monks of Gethsemani made with Columbia. About half the disc is from the Gethsemani schola, and the other half by Dutch Benedictines (Niederaltaicher Scholarem/Konrad Ruhland). Sony Classical calls the release "Greatest Hits—Chant."

(BROTHER) PATRICK HART, O.C.S.O.

Life with Father father

El Cerrito, Calif.

To the Editors: This is a comment on two articles in your April 7 issue: Richard Schoenherr's "Numbers Don't Lie" and Dennis Burke's "Why Priests Can't Preach." In the first, Schoenherr recommends dropping mandatory celibacy as a first step toward restoring the number of candidates to the priesthood. In the following piece, Dennis Burke suggests that priests spend much more time in preparing to preach, possibly thinking about their sermons all week, then spending "eight or nine hours" writing out their notes.

A question occurs: How can a non-celibate priest give to a wife and children the weekly attention that they deserve and

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still find all this time for *only the sermon*? A second question: What about money? Suppose the married priest has to supplement the low salary the Catholic church pays its priests by holding an outside job in order to meet the expenses of supporting a family? Then how would he find the time? JAMES R. PANELLA

Mow the lawn, Father

Middletown, N.J.

To the Editors: Richard Schoenherr's "Numbers Don't Lie" ably discusses some of the uncomfortable facts about the church's supply of clergy, but not all of them. If parishes some day are permitted to have married clergy, they must be prepared for complications. They may reasonably expect large families, with requirements for homes and adequate incomes to provide for family needs (clothing, groceries, schooling, medical care, etc.). No longer will there be only the "priests' house," but a compound of one or more homes full of kids with bicycles and other paraphernalia everywhere. "Father" will be expected to keep the house in good shape, too. A fascinating prospect that may lead to consideration of an alternative, opening the priesthood to women. EDWARD F. ROGERS

Meaning of ministry

Arlington, Tex.

To the Editors: Your issue on the priesthood was of much interest. It may be worth adding that there are already some married priests serving in the Roman Catholic church, in this country and elsewhere. A few, like me, serve in a handful of "Anglican Use" parishes; most serve in regular Latin Rite parishes, institutions, and chaplaincies. There is, therefore, some empirical evidence on hand as to the nature and quality of a married priesthood. But little attention has been paid to this experience, apart from a small survey by the late Joseph Fichter, S.J. (*The Pastoral Provisions*, Sheed & Ward) and occasional secular journalistic interest.

Having said that, I do not believe that mandatory celibacy is the critical issue in the decline in vocations to the priesthood. Oddly enough, I suspect that Dennis Burke puts his finger on it when in considering the preaching ministry he contrasts the role of the fisherman with that of the aquarium-keeper. As one priest put it to me, he did not feel that his priestly vocation was to serve as the entertainment director on a cruise ship. I cannot imagine that many young men are likely to respond to a vocation which seems to entail the administration of mega-size corporation parishes, to be financial bureaucrats, and to be involved in innumerable social action programs.

The Welsh Anglican priest-poet, R.S. Thomas, wrote of the clergy as—

> Venerable men, their black cloth
> A little dusty, a little green
> With holy mildew....
> ...They left no books,
> Memorial to their lone thought
> In grey parishes; rather they wrote
> On men's hearts and in the minds
> Of young children sublime words
> Too soon forgotten. God in his time
> Or out of time will correct this.

The conviction that one is called to bring the gifts of God to the People of God lies at the heart of the priestly vocation. That, with crystalline clarity, describes the ministry which my father exercised in the Church of England for more than fifty years; it is my understanding of the priestly ministry to which I was ordained in the Church of England thirty-five years ago, and which was renewed in the Catholic priesthood which was bestowed upon me last year. (REV.) ALLAN HAWKINS

"I've called you all here to respond to the charges that I don't spend enough time with my family."

A different future

Anderson, Calif.

To the Editors: Having just digested your editorial "Where Are We Going?" and Richard Schoenherr's article "Numbers Don't Lie," I offer these comments.

Even if there were not the specter of a massive shortage of (celibate, male) priests facing us in the next five years, the church would need to address its approach to serving the People of God more seriously.

With the continuing state of denial among the hierarchy, the most likely prospect we face is one of more parish closures and hasty emergency solutions. Already in many dioceses, Catholics face "rolling priestly blackouts" as bishops and priests' personnel boards attempt to fill the growing number of vacancies by transferring their limited personnel around. As one vacancy is filled, another is created. The result is that there is little matching of the needs of the people with their pastoral leader.

One must pity the poor bishop who has so few to choose among and a host of vacancies to fill. Priests with a history of difficulties in prior assignments are still being appointed to new pastorships.

Consider what could occur if we were blessed with a *surplus* of priestly ministers (both married and female, as well as optionally celibate). A proliferation of Catholic parishes could come into being. Today, opening a new parish requires a capital campaign in the millions of dollars to construct all the facilities on a scale large enough to serve 2,500 to 4,000 families and as many as 800 to 1,000 people at each Mass.

Imagine what it would be like if we were to design parishes for a maximum capacity of only 250 families. The pastor and his or her flock could really know each other by name; the entire community could gather for worship at a common liturgy; and the cost of building modest churches rather than cathedral-sized facilities would shrink dramatically, perhaps ap-

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proximating the cost of a couple of new homes in a typical neighborhood.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, movement to this model would alleviate the principal causes of stress, burn-out, and dysfunction among our valued priests. They would be free to be among their people, and to foster the workings of the Holy Spirit both in the parish and in the larger community, so that the work of evangelization could be put back on the front burner.

Let the dialogue continue. Before we can create a new future, we must imagine it. (DEACON) MIKE EVANS

The ten-day week

Berkeley, Calif.

To the Editors: Preaching is my passion. I have taught preaching in theology schools for years, and preach whenever I can but only when prepared. Had I read Dennis Burke's "Why Priests Can't Preach" three years ago I would have agreed with it all but totally. Not so any longer.

What Burke wrote about the need to prepare for effective preaching is a given. But his suggestion that a priest can find time to prepare if he really wants to ignores the context, the peculiar experience of being a pastor.

Three years ago I became pastor of a very small but heady parish in North Berkeley (across the Bay from Burke's Marin). I thought I would have more time than ever to prepare homilies but quickly discovered that "pastor" doesn't describe the job accurately; in bleak moments I think of myself as "the Branch Manager of the North Berkeley Branch of the Diocese of Oakland, a Corporation Sole."

The job description of a branch manager asks rather more than a full-time commitment, without any allowance for prayer, recreation, study, or homily preparation. It requires attendance at meetings six or seven evenings a week: budget, school board, parents' association, liturgy committee, social justice committee. It includes filling out an endless stream of forms and responding to many programs mandated by the home office (the chancery), along with attendance at related meetings and conferences. In a small parish it also means filling the roles of sexton and sacristan. And then there's the third major job: fundraising for good and necessary parish and diocesan causes....

So why can't priests preach? The Catholic community has not yet found the secret of providing the pastor time to do the essentials of priestly life. Being well trained and inexpensive, parish priests must first do the branch manager work; only then can they pray, play, study, or work on sermons. If, in consequence, the pastor is a poor preacher, he will only be criticized; if he is a poor branch manager, he will be punished.

This is a structural problem. Until everybody accepts financial and organizational changes allowing others than the ordained to do much of the managerial work, the quality of preaching will remain mediocre. The greatest sin the church at every level can commit is to demand so much temporal administration of the priest that he cannot be well prepared to preach.

PATRICK LA BELLE, O.P.

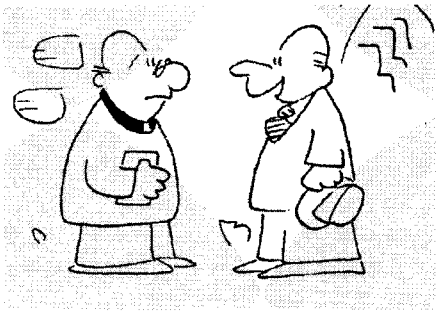
The goal of preaching

Petaluma, Calif.

To the Editors: In our visually oriented culture, Dennis Burke's article is a welcome affirmation of the extraordinary gift of language—the power of words to turn over the heart, to make new.

How refreshing to read support of homilies written out word for word and delivered with fervent urgency from the pulpit! We place implicit and explicit pressure upon our priests to preach in a style à la Vatican II chic: strolling down in front of the altar; using casual, humorous "street talk"; and, certainly, unencumbered by a written text. As Burke reminds us, the first principle of preaching is conversion. Not entertainment.

On the other hand, Burke's suggested cure for less than ideal preaching—a single preacher at all Sunday Masses—bears costly trade-offs. (1) I have heard from priests that, preaching in such a format, they find themselves preparing homilies to please the presiding pastor or to impress a senior colleague, rather than laboring from their heart to reach the people. (2) The notion of liturgical integrity cannot be lightly dismissed. Nothing is more jarring and deflating than, after hearing a remarkable (or even mediocre) homily, to see that person of prophetic voice slip out the sacristy door betimes. Something of the hearer leaves with the retreating preacher; the intensity of presence for which our Eucharist strives is inevitably ruptured. It is worse than a host being called away from an intimate dinner party. Worse than a great unfinished symphony. (3) The designated-Sunday-preacher curtails the freedom of choice of a conscientious worshiper who would attend a particular Mass on Sunday to hear a preferred homilist (admittedly, a Machiavellian concern).



"Great sermon, Father. If I ever want to find out more about sin, I sure know who to come to!"

Finally, the title of the piece, "Why Priests Can't Preach," generates a dialectical point of inquiry: "Why Parishioners Can't Hear." Burke writes that a homily demands hours of preparation. How many minutes, I wonder, do we in the pews spend preparing our hearts and minds to hear?...Perhaps the cultivation of an age-old humility, the recollection of our dependent being before God, would engender better listening. A homilist may indeed be sharing what has set him "on fire," but unless we have ears prepared to hear, he will be flying solo on the "shoulders of grace" as it works to bend our souls to Christ.

MICHON MARIE MATTHIESEN

Some priests can preach

Alameda, Calif.

To the Editors: I read Dennis Burke's article with joy—not because many priests can't preach, but because my parish (Saint Barnabas) is staffed by members of the Society of the Precious Blood. Seldom have I heard a poor sermon by a member of the Society, perhaps because they ful-

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fill what Burke calls the primary requirement for good preaching: missionary zeal, with its emphasis on evangelization. Whether they serve in parishes, hospitals, on college campuses, or in the missions, members of the Society consider themselves primarily missionaries. Our current pastor, Father Jeffrey Keyes, exemplifies that and all the other qualities of a good preacher that the article mentions. He relates his missionary spirituality to the everyday cares and blessings of his parishioners, and he does it with a sense of joy, wonder, and certainty that is most contagious. And there is no question that "Prepare, prepare, prepare" is his byword.

PEGGY DOHERTY

It isn't just time

Mundelein, Ill.

To the Editors: Several years ago I had a student who I felt was a good apprentice preacher. When I told him so, he remarked that if all his classmates prepared as long as he did, they would preach as well. Though I sympathized with him, I couldn't entirely agree with him that "it's all in the preparation." I had a similar reaction to the article by Dennis Burke, especially since in two of his examples preparation comes down to "how long you spend preparing."

Elsewhere in the article, Burke says a priest must read, must care for his people, must read the Bible to see the word of God in everything, must care about his preaching. He writes that "the great preacher must have the heart of a missionary." His closing example shows a priest encouraging the converted in their daily living. So why does he "rest his case" on how much time that priest had spent preparing?

Why can't priests preach? When they cannot, I suspect the answer is complex and varies with the individual. What is his understanding of the nature of a homily? How does he read the Scriptures? What is his vision of the way things are in our world?

Still, I hope my students take much of Burke's advice to heart: spreading the preparation over the entire week, writing out the homily word for word, meditating on the Bible, reading...anything.

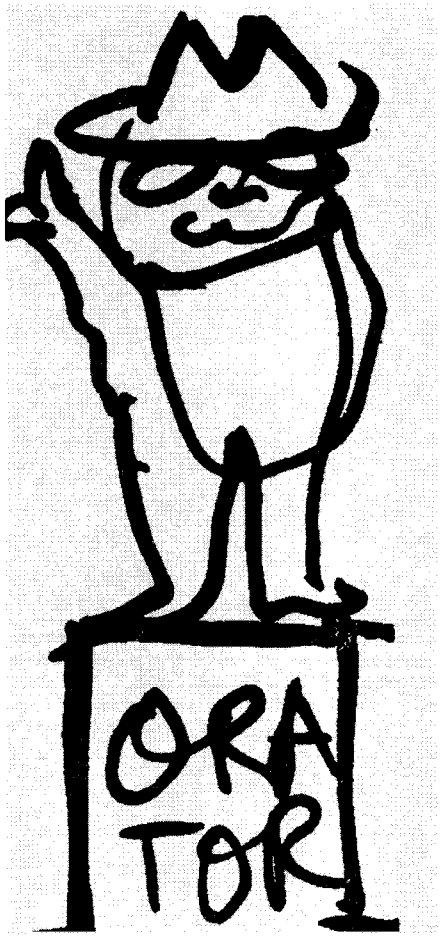
(REV.) DANIEL S. SIWEK

Sermons for grown-ups

Wayne, Pa.

To the Editors: Dennis Burke's essay took me back to the first Protestant service I ever attended, and the impact that the sermon had me. I was a twenty-seven-year-old practicing Catholic, with a practicing Protestant girl friend. She had been badgering me for some time to go to church with her.

I remember being struck by the similarities between the Presbyterian order of worship and the Catholic liturgy. Most of



all, I remember the sermon. The pastor used the biblical text, the parable of the Good Samaritan, as a springboard for exhorting his all-white, conservative, middle-class congregation to practice racial tolerance. His words were clear, logical, intelligent, and enriched with literary, topical, and other references from his personal experience. Here was one intelligent human being reasoning with a group of likewise intelligent beings, and making an unmistakable point: "By this parable, Jesus was telling us believers to lay aside our prejudices, and, by our actions, show love for those who are different from us, including those of different skin color."

The contrast with my Catholic experience was stark. The sermons I was used to were mostly exhortations to give money to the church. They were expressed in terms appropriate for fourth graders, rather than intelligent adults. And there was the racial issue. As a Catholic who felt strongly about civil rights, I was distressed by the unconfronted racism I saw within the church, the lack of leadership by the hierarchy, the neglect of the subject in the pulpit. In all my years of regular attendance at Mass, I had heard only three sermons on racial discord, and they were lukewarm. And here, in my very first experience of a Protestant service, I found the racial issue being addressed explicitly and in biblical and moral terms no real Christian could ignore.

That first Protestant church experience happened more than thirty-four years ago. I went on to marry that Protestant girl, and, for a while, we attended both Catholic and Protestant services every Sunday. Eventually, however, I became convinced that the substance and style of Protestant Christianity were more appropriate for us. In 1968 we joined a social-action-oriented American Baptist church, and have been members ever since. In that time the few Catholic services I have attended have not shown signs of significant change. The sermons were warmer and more personal and no longer only about money. But they still seemed aimed at adolescents. Sermons aside, Catholic racism and bigotry are, if anything, worse: More Catholics are buying into the Republican ethic and following the lead of the Pat Buchanans rather than the Mario Cuomos and the Ted Kennedys.

The factors leading to my conversion to Protestant Christianity were, of course, much more complex than simply my response to a stirring sermon. But the sermon issue did highlight one major Catholic failing for me: the woeful inability of the institutional church to communicate even the most fundamental of Jesus' teachings to the laity. I don't think that *Commonweal* will argue very strongly against my ob-

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servation that the communications inadequacy is also more complex: The church clearly doesn't know how to *listen* to its people either. JOSEPH P. SPAMPINATO

Preaching comes first

Collegeville, Minn.

To the Editors: I am taking a few moments from my preparation time for next Sunday's homily to respond to a statement in Dennis Burke's article: "Ordination does not necessarily include the charism of preaching." Why not?

Vatican II's *Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests* explicitly declares: "[P]riests, as co-workers with their bishops, have *as their primary duty* the proclamation of the gospel of God to all" (Ch. II, #4; emphasis added). We will get better preachers and fewer dull homilies only when seminary faculties and ordaining bishops do make the charism of preaching an essential part of the vocation to the priesthood.

Would anyone ordain a candidate who, for example, is unsuited to preside at the Eucharist because of uncontrolled stage fright, or an intolerably poor public presence? Should a candidate be ordained who has demonstrated that he suffers from incurably cold feet, cold heart, and cold tongue when it comes time to ignite the minds and hearts of his hearers with the fire of Jesus' Good News? I don't think so. So let's make the charism of preaching a *sine qua non* for ordination.

DANIEL DURKEN, O.S.B.

More on bad preaching

Cambridge, Mass.

To the Editors: Dennis Burke has written an engaging and skillful article explaining "Why Priests Can't Preach." Yes, Catholic clergy spend too little time on their homilies. However, this is hardly the most fundamental reason for the current situation. The reasons for the epidemic of bad preaching run much deeper.

Long experience, both in the pulpit and in the pews, leads me to two more radical causes for the wretched state of Catholic preaching. First, most clergy have a misguided theological orientation. Instead of looking toward the actual world in which God is active in the lives of people and their communities, priests usually talk about abstract religious concepts which remain unconnected to concrete life. As one religious sister once asked, "Why can't they ever talk about something real?"

Secondly, the decline in classical studies has left most clergy painfully ignorant about the forms of effective public discourse. Rarely do parishioners hear a homily or sermon that has even a beginning, middle, and end. Perhaps television has robbed preachers of the ability to present thoughts effectively in words instead of in sound and image bites.

Commonweal deserves thanks for running an article on a subject which holds much greater importance for the community of faith than is usually recognized. Catholic preaching badly needs fixing.

RICHARD GRIFFIN

Mediocre to lousy

Somewhere Else

To the Editors: I picked up the April 7 issue in our public library because I noted the title, "Why Priests Can't Preach." I am glad somebody spoke out! Year after year we are exposed to mediocre if not lousy preaching. I admire the patience of the people in the pews. I wonder whether they actually listen. I agree with the article's subtitle that "it's all in the preparation." Most priests do not prepare, and it shows. Maybe we should have "designated preachers" to lessen the risks that passengers in the pews now encounter.

Please withhold my name. I want to keep my job on the staff of a parish where these views would be most unwelcome.

LAICUS

A two-way street

Philadelphia, Pa.

To the Editors: Dennis Burke's perceptive "Why Priests Can't Preach" pleads for a sequel: "Why Catholic People Can't Listen." Like most critics of preachers, Burke overlooks the symbiotic relationship between preacher and assembly. Bad preaching feeds off bad hearing, and vice versa.

My own pulpit experience has taught me that the most colorful and meticulously prepared homily crumbles into verbal ash when people stare into space, flip through missalettes, yawn, or replay the latest episode of "NYPD Blue" in their mental theaters. Conversely, a rather ordinary homily blossoms into something powerful when preached among people who truly hunger for the Word. The assembly's attitude, manifested by body language and response, can deaden or energize preaching. I've had both experiences. Sad to say, the first is vastly more common.

What to do? To begin with, recognize that bad preaching is not an exclusively clerical problem but a disease caused by contemporary culture, which values entertainment so highly and so utterly disdains all forms of oratory. This powerful culture shapes both preacher and assembly, making both parties bored by words and the Word.

Burke touches on the cultural dimension when he cites a "seasoned pastor" astonished by younger priests who spend four hours a day watching TV. (Only four? What an ascetical rectory!) But he says nothing of the typical consumer of homilies who spends perhaps thirty-five to fifty hours a week mesmerized by HBO, ESPN, the Internet, and Rush Limbaugh. Indeed, the narcotic effect of the media is so potent and pervasive that even when I attend people in an intensive care unit who are facing imminent death, the words and actions of the sacraments must compete, often feebly, with the current episode of "General Hospital" blaring overhead.

The cure for bad preaching involves therapy for poor listeners as well as bad preachers. (REV.) MICHAEL KERPER

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A super superego

ANTHONY A. WIGGINS

I was back in my hometown, on Lake Superior, for a golf tournament. After learning that Pat Lyons was in Saint Mary's Hospital, dying of cancer, my wife and I rushed there. We were turned away by the floor nurse, a ruddy, cheerful lady who said Pat was so ill there would be no visitors. I persisted: "I must see him. This man changed my life." The nurse winked and told us to wait, that she would check with her superior. As we sat there, I had time to think about Pat.

While we were growing up, Pat Lyons was the best-known bachelor in Duluth, not because of his power, money, or being the "town eligible," but because of "Pat Lyons's Boys."

I first met Pat when I joined Boy Scout Troop 40. Pat knew how to make those scouting maxims come alive: "When we work, we work; when we play, we play, but no mixing"; and, "Concentrate hard now, so you won't regret tomorrow that you didn't try harder today."

It's difficult to understand the source of Pat's intensity and energy. He was so lean, it appeared that a good wind would blow him away. Tall (6'2"), he had hawk-like eyes that peered through wire-rim glasses. When he wanted an answer to one of his philosophical questions you tried to give it. He was around forty-five then, and there were gray flecks in his sandy hair. His rich tenor voice would ring out whenever he encountered you on Superior Street. I always felt that Pat might be watching me, his half-smoked cigar in his hand, so I'd better behave.

Later, Pat gave up the scoutmastership and formed a boys' choir for his friend Father Joe Cashen's silver ordination jubilee. It was a rousing success. So Pat kept the choir in operation and molded this group of jocks, good students, and bad boys into a choir which was in demand throughout the Midwest. Each Sunday, when we sang at 9:15 Mass at Holy Rosary, Pat would lead us, his back to the congregation. I can still see his joyous face, after a particular rousing hymn like "Regina Coeli." He would open his mouth wide, in a silent grin, showing all his cigar-stained teeth, his hands clasped in front of his chest, in a congratulatory salute to us.

Now, as I waited for the head nurse, I recalled these and other incidents. I can never go by a derelict without thinking of Pat. When he would spy a Native American who was down and out around Duluth, Pat would give that person a fifty-cent piece. Even now, thirty years later, I never seem to come up with more than a quarter.

Whenever I would visit Pat's law office, there would be several Chippewas waiting. Pat routinely helped them out of their legal tangles, at no charge. I went to his office late one afternoon, after Father Hogan had taken his last shenanigan from me. I had locked him out of the main study hall; he expelled me from Cathedral High School. I didn't want to tell my parents, and I didn't know where else to go.

Pat went over the problem. "Tell me what commitments you can make, Tony, if I were to negotiate with Father Hogan."

"I know I made a big mistake, and I'll commit to any program he wants, if you'll talk to him," I replied shakily.

Pat wrote out the commitments: Apologize to the two priests involved, in front of the study hall; and promise a new attitude. Pat then called Father Hogan and was able to get me back into school. When he hung up the phone, he rumbled: "Hey, let's go get a milkshake."

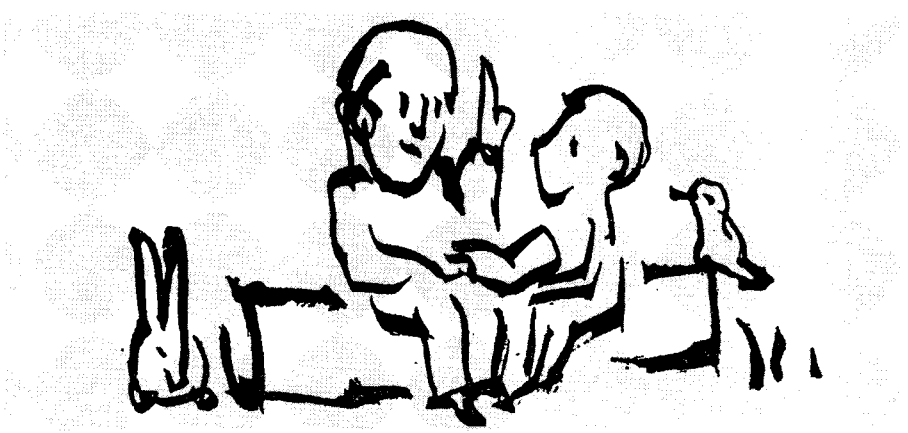
Later, when he left me at the Lester Park bus stop, I said, "Father Hogan thinks I'm a bum. I really appreciate your getting me out of this mess." It was then Pat said something that still rings in my mind: "I don't know what Father Hogan thinks, but in my book, you're the salt of the earth." Then he turned and walked away.

Looking down through the years, I can still see Pat walking across that wind-blown street. I wonder if he ever realized the indelible impression he'd made on my life? From then on, I always tried to live up to his opinion of me.

At last, the cheerful floor nurse jostled in. "When I asked Sister Agnes if you could go in, she smiled, and said, 'Oh, another of Pat's Boys, with the same old story. We'd better let him in, like we did the others.'"

I approached Pat, frail and unconscious on the bed. I took his hand, trying to thank him in a few words for the tremendous influence he had had on my life. It was a thrill when I felt him softly squeeze my hand.

Pat died later that night. □



Anthony A. Wiggins is a free-lance writer from Wilton, Connecticut.

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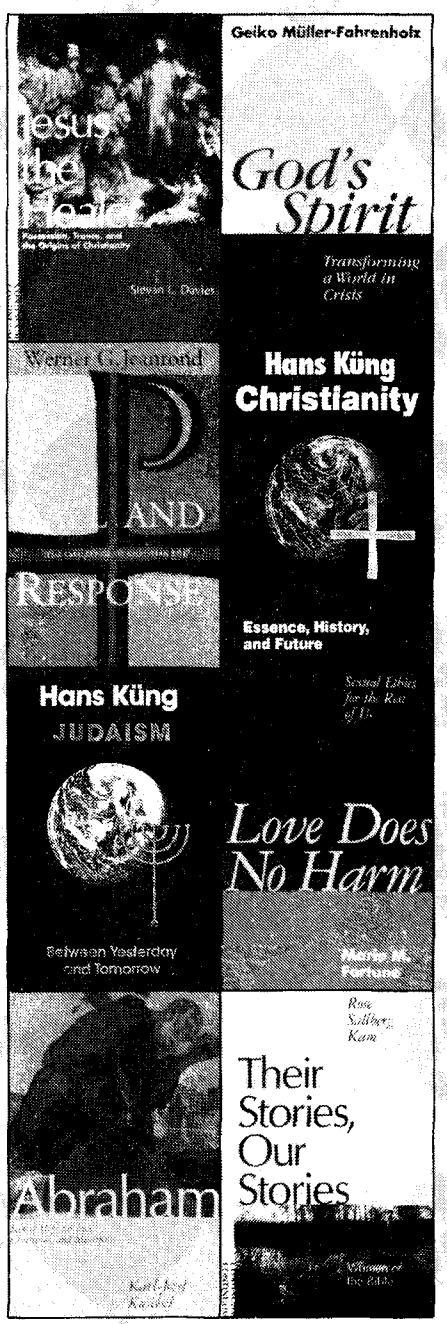

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